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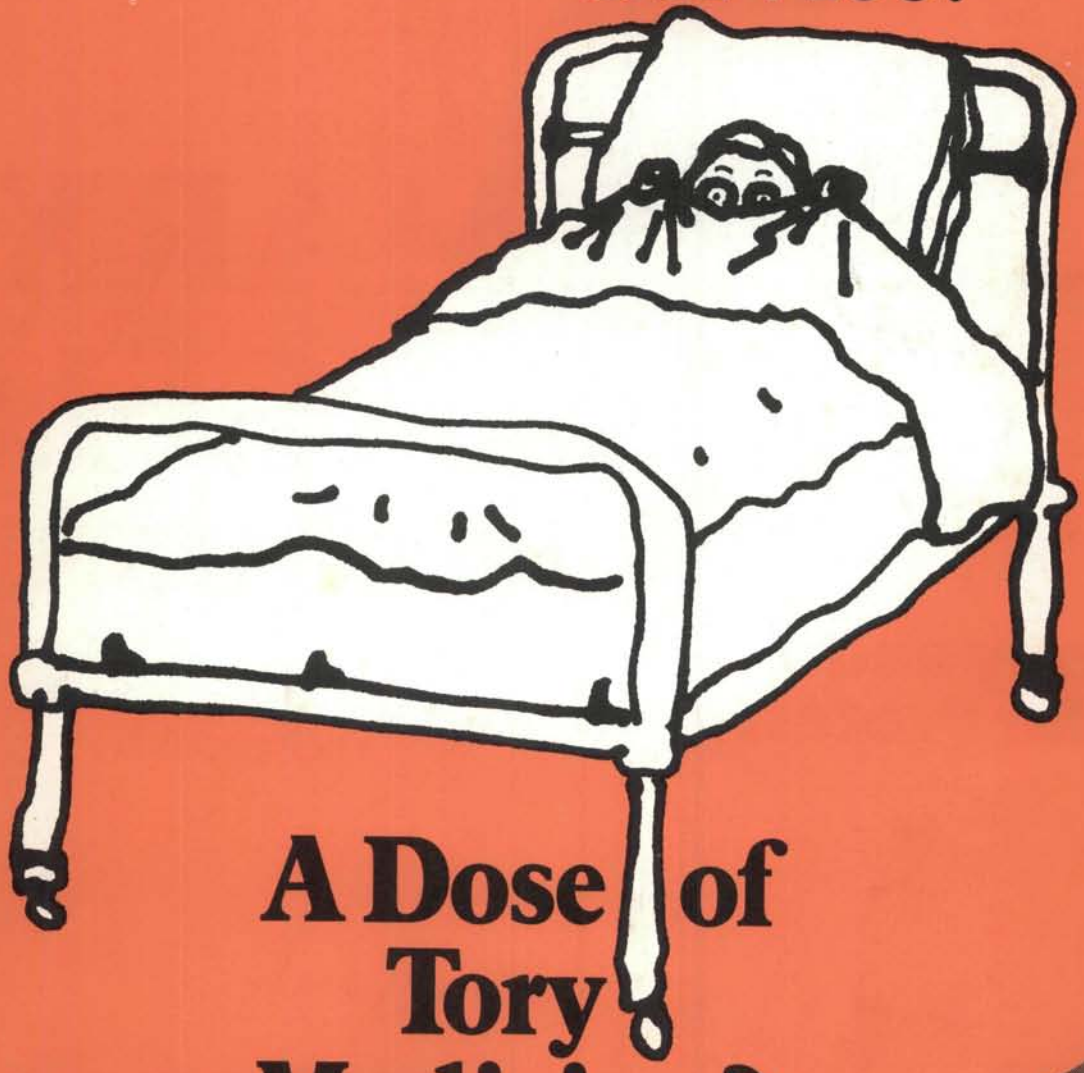

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Marxism Today

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FOCUS

BRAZIL

Brazilian society is currently passing through a period of extreme economic and political tension, from which it is not easy to see the way ahead.

The continuing political crisis stems from an attempt by the controlling group in the military, beginning in 1974, to bring about a transition from an authoritarian military regime to bourgeois civilian government, albeit one which would be controlled by conservative political forces (the model is Greece or Spain). The more far-sighted in the officer corps saw that Brazilian capitalism could not survive without the political incorporation of the new social forces created by the process of rapid capitalist development, and events in Iran served to strengthen this conviction. Furthermore, conflicts and corruption within the armed forces became intolerable, and the business elite was pressing for greater access to state decision-making.

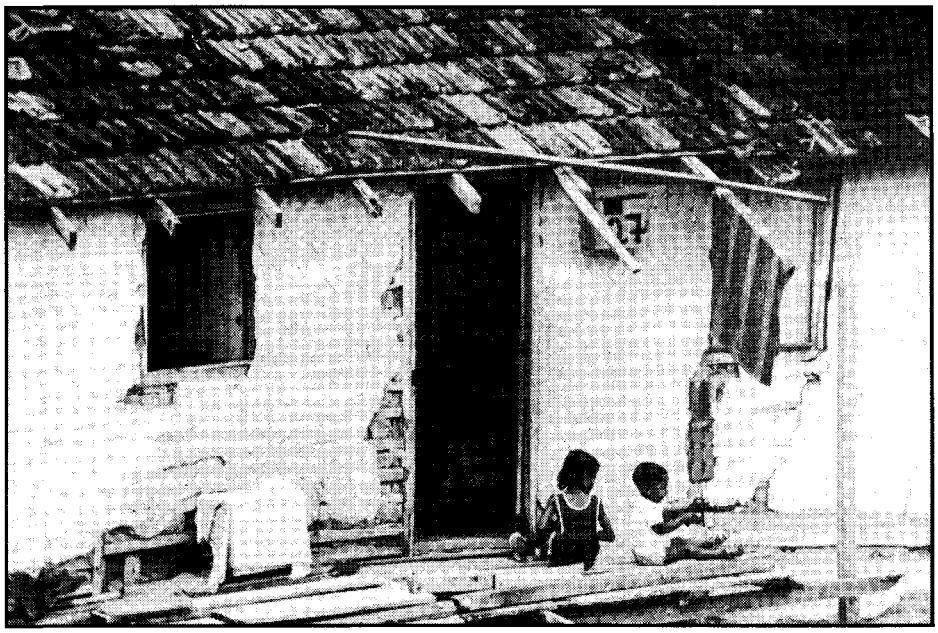
Such a transition is, however, not easy to achieve in a country where at least a majority of the voting population live in considerable misery, and several electoral tests of opinion (which have taken place without the military relinquishing power) have been won by the opposition MDB party (which united political groups opposed to the authoritarian regime across a broad spectrum). After being on the defensive for some time, the regime is now attempting to regain the political initiative by a re-organisation of political forces, whose aim is to fragment the opposition (into reformist and more radical elements) and consolidate electoral support around a Centre-Right party.

The success of this political project of the current ruling group within the military is threatened by many factors. First, by the failure of civilian conservative politicians to formulate a set of reformist proposals to tame the most savage elements of Brazilian capitalism, which might have electoral appeal amongst the mass of the population. Conservative civilian politicians devote must of their time to consolidating their support amongst the country's highly fragmented economic and regional elites, rather than to the task of formulating an even mildly progressive set of reforms.

The second main threat to the transition to conservative civilian rule lies in the fact that opposition groups have not remained passive in the face of manoeuvrings by the ruling elite to stabilise the political foundations of Brazilian capitalism. The attempted transition, accompanied by a relaxation of censorship, relative freedom of political association and a general reduction in the level of torture and political repression created a genuinely more relaxed political atmosphere, in which opposition groups could organise and mobilise public opinion. The opposition was able to keep up the pressure on the government to maintain the momentum towards transition and liberalisation. Its electoral victories came as a result of successful politicisation over issues such as inflation, poverty and the need for democratic reforms. But as part of this process, since 1975 there have suddenly emerged new kinds of political movement, based principally on the social forces in São Paulo created by Brazil's extremely rapid industrialisation. These new movements are essentially of a grass roots variety and they are the first movement in Brazilian history, which elite groups have been unable to manipulate.

The working-classes in São Paulo have been mobilised over such general issues as the cost-of-living and wage policy, as well as over more local issues, such as water supply, sanitation, local transport etc. Radical members of the Church have been influential in this process. Simultaneously, there emerged a new trade union leadership in São Paulo (whose principal figure is the metal-workers' leader 'Lula'), which succeeded in wresting control from government-controlled syndicate hacks. On the basis of extremely careful organisation, this new, independent leadership succeeded in organising a series of strikes and has contributed to a general raising of political consciousness over wage and inflation issues. In turn, the new union leadership has allied itself to the various grass roots campaigns to form a new Workers' Party, with a radical reform programme. Despite recent setbacks (the arrest of union leaders and the breaking of the car industry strike), Lula has succeeded in becoming the first, national working-class leader in Brazilian history, and it is difficult to see how (short of the most extreme political repression) these new political movements can be prevented from growing. The danger posed by these movements to the managers of the transition is that they are out of control, and the gradual radicalisation of the movement makes it less susceptible to incorporation.

The third threat to the transition lies in the ever-present threat of a coup from hard-line groups within the military, who seem to think that permanent military authoritarianism is the only viable political regime for Brazilian capitalism. This threat is, at times, extremely close, and it forces the ruling group within the armed forces to slow the pace of transition and, at times, even to put it into reverse. The combination of continued political pressure from below and the extremely unstable economic situation (see below) make the threat of hardline military intervention currently greater than it has been for some time.



The first steps towards political reform in 1974 coincided with the end of the period of rapid economic growth (1968-73), known as the Brazilian economic 'miracle', though the two events cannot be considered to be causally related. Rapid growth in this period centred on the industrial sector and was made possible initially by fuller utilisation of spare capacity and subsequently by a tremendous spurt in capital accumulation. The consumer durables (especially automobiles) and the capital goods industries were the leading sectors, with the growth of demand being

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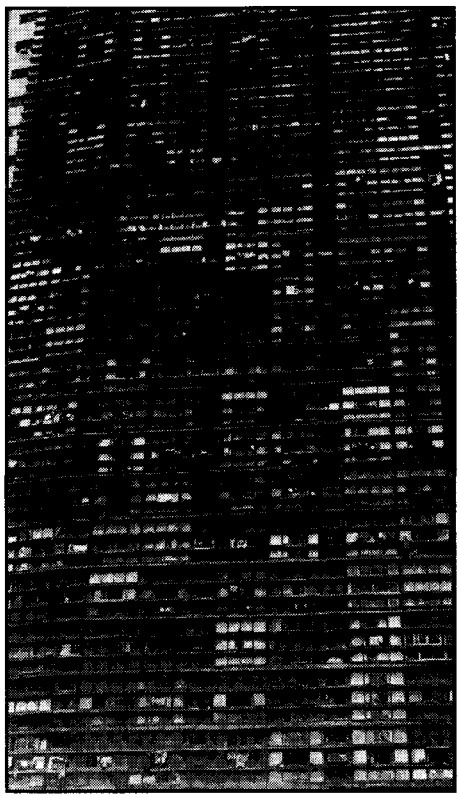

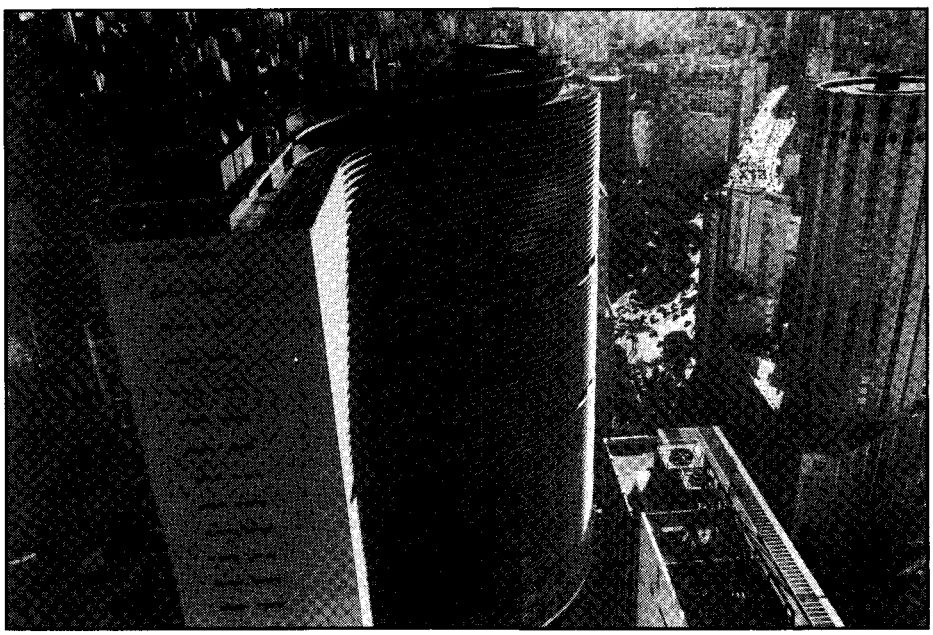

fuelled by a rapid expansion of consumer credit and state and multinational investment spending. Employment growth in manufacturing and construction was very rapid, and although income gains were very unequally distributed, certain (more skilled) manual workers almost certainly experienced real income gains, even though the least skilled manual workers probably suffered absolute impoverishment. A notable feature of the 'miracle' were cuts in the 'social wage' and an emphasis on private as opposed to social consumption.

This period of rapid growth, gently declining rates of inflation and relative external equilibrium gave way after 1974 to a severe external disequilibrium and accelerating inflation, to which the government's response has generally been a 'stop-go' management cycle and considerably lower rates of growth on average. Despite continuous adjustment to policy, the rate of inflation has gradually accelerated to a current rate of 80% pa, while the external debt has risen to US$50 billion and the required capital inflow for this year is estimated at US$16 billion. The causes of the decline in growth and of the recurrence of Brazil's historic problems of inflation and external disequilibrium are a matter of some considerable controversy on the Brazilian Left.

External disequilibrium did not arise solely as the result of the rise in oil prices, though oil imports currently absorb 70% of Brazil's exports of goods and services; in 1974-75, excess demand from the growth spurt inflated the import bill as a result of capacity-shortages and, subsequently, the cost of servicing the debt (interest plus amortisation) and profit outflows associated with multinational investment created a purely financial requirement for new borrowing. Government adjusted the growth rate to keep foreign borrowing to within reasonable proportions, but there are obvious political constraints to deflationary action, especially during a period when political liberalisation is being attempted. Currently, Brazil's debt and refinancing problems pose an enormous threat to the stability of the private international financial system. In Brazil, a major threat to continuing political liberalisation lies in the fact that Brazil will need to have recourse — certainly next year, if not earlier — to the IMF, the enforcement of whose loan conditions may require the return of the hard-line military.

The recurrence of inflation has multiple causes. Imported and oil-related inflation are undoubtedly important elements; in the industrial sector, recession-related higher average costs and possibly higher mark-ups also contribute, as do higher financial costs due to credit contraction. The shortage of food for domestic consumption, which has been exacerbated by the diversion of output to international markets, is a historic source of inflationary pressure, which has never been resolved. The most important new element in the inflationary process has been, initially, government-sponsored attempts to raise manual workers' wages (linked to the political strategy) and, subsequently, the ability of the now more militant workers' movement to defend living standards. Indeed, in general, the ability of all groups in society to resist income losses resulting from terms of trade changes as well as from any form of domestic redistribution between groups has contributed to accelerating inflation. There is no doubt that inflation rates of 80% pa are highly de-stabilising politically, because social groups experience very pronounced fluctuations in real income over relatively short periods of time, despite more frequent adjustments to nominal incomes. The increased industrial and political militancy, which has accompanied mounting inflation, has turned upper-and middle-class groups even more strongly against reformism and strengthened authoritarian tendencies.

The success of the government's political strategy hinges on obtaining an electoral majority for a mildly reformist programme, implemented by the existing civilian conservative political leadership. However, both inflation and external disequlibrium make slow growth inevitable, leaving fewer resources for the mild redistribution, which is the key to the political incorporation of popular groups. Inflation, which to some extent is an expression of increased political freedom, threatens to radicalise further both popular groups and the traditionally conservative elites and middle-classes, while international groups may make anti-working-class policies a pre-condition for further financial assistance. It must be concluded that the prospects for a peaceful transition to a bourgeois political democracy are not very encouraging. At any moment the Brazilian Left fears a return to repressive authoritarian rule.

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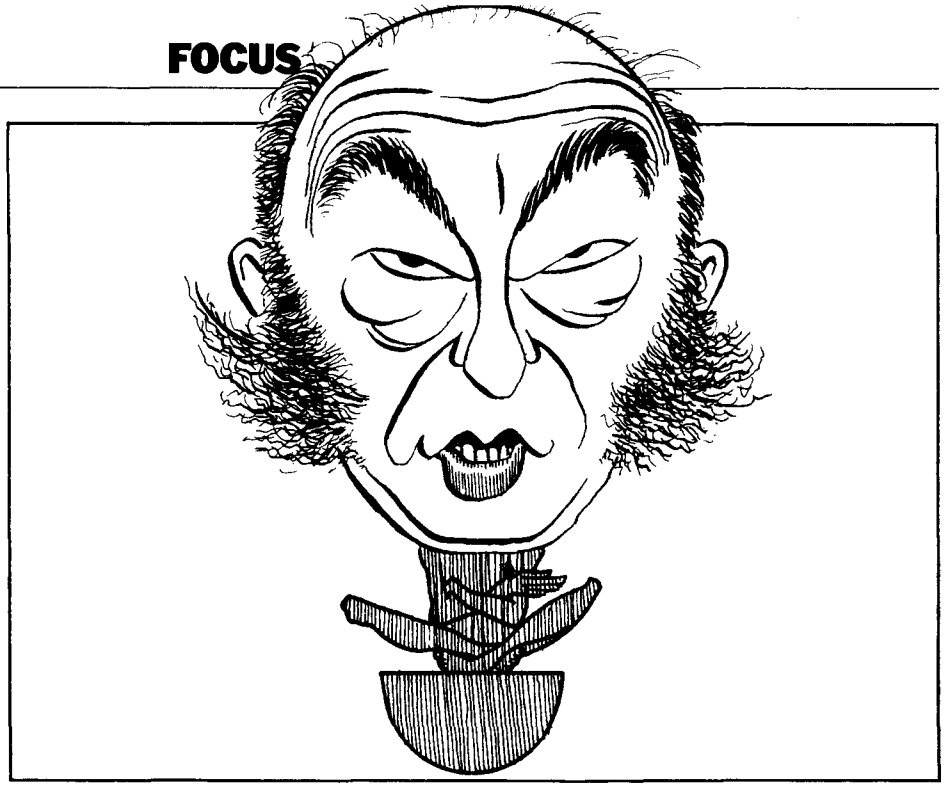
HIGHER EDUCATION



'We now have something of a policy vacuum at national level . . . the Government has seen it as its duty, fully confirmed by its electoral mandate, to deal first with public expenditure.' It was in these words that a senior official at the Department of Education and Science described the lack of government policy towards higher education, at an educational conference last December.

The supposed necessity of reducing public expenditure has been the major determinant of the Conservative government's attitude towards higher education since it took office. A number of social and educational questions which have long taxed the minds of civil servants within the DES are being answered, at least temporarily, through the crude demands of cutting public spending. In the process, many aspects of the higher education system which was built up after and around the Robbins' report of 1963 are being significantly changed.

The new expenditure-led policies are having most effect as the result of decisions in three major areas: overseas students, future access to higher education, and the financing of the non-university sector.

The decision to charge overseas students from outside the EEC so-called 'full economic cost' tuition fees (fees for next year's entrants are to range from £2,000pa for arts courses to £5,000pa for medical courses) was taken as a supposedly easy and uncontentious way to cut public expenditure, and at the same time to 'solve' the continuing problem of providing for the unplanned and still rising growth in the number of overseas entrants. This move at one stroke made UK higher education almost the most expensive in the world, and is bound to mean that many hard hit will be students from those developing countries which have not yet been able to establish indigenous systems of higher education, often as the result of colonial domination by Britain.

To what extent, and in what areas, there will be a fall in the number of overseas students will not become clear until provisional figures are published in the autumn. But it is already widely recognised that the viability of many courses with a large complement of overseas students is endangered by the new fees policy. Courses in engineering and technology, to which government and industry are otherwise so committed, are especially vulnerable (20% of university undergraduates, 30% of advanced further education students and more than 50% of university postgraduates in these subject areas are from overseas). The educational prospects of would-be home students are thus being restricted by the same policy that is hitting their overseas counterparts.

But it is not just the overseas students fees' policy that will limit the opportunities of home students. The access of all qualified people to higher education has been guaranteed over the last two decades by the so-called Robbins principle, which stated that courses of higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so. It has long been anticipated that the provision of higher education would therefore continue to expand in order to meet student demand, which is expected to peak in the late 1980s. But public expenditure constraints have led to the replacement of the Robbins principle by the policy of 'level funding'. This means, quite simply, that the resources available for home students in higher education each year will remain (in theory) at about the same level as this year (1979/80). Therefore the total home student population should remain roughly constant, rather than expanding to meet demand.

One of the most immediate consequences of the level funding policy will be the curtailment of opportunities, not only among traditional school leaver entrants, but also among those other groups — such as mature and working class entrants, women, the ethnic minorities — which some institutions have just started to attract adequately into higher education.

The new policy also raises questions about the management of resources in higher education. A system which has been used to change mainly through continued expansion is being told that expansion is to cease but that change will still be demanded of it. Rhodes Boyson, the Minister responsible for higher education, likes to portray the new situation as a challenge: 'once we accept that we must provide for research, development and innovation from our existing resources', he had said 'we can define the problems to be solved and generate the creative debate on priorities essential to progress'. It is in this atmosphere that talk of giving a 'broad steer' to subject balance is being mooted, and it is against such a background that reaction is being expressed to plans for the rationalisation of parts of higher education (such as the University Grants Committee's report on Russian and Russian Studies in Universities, and the Flowers report on the organisation of medical education in the University of London).

The question of management of resources is also at the heart of the debate about the control and funding of the maintained (non-university) sector of higher education. The cost of nearly all maintained higher education institutions (ie polytechnics, colleges and institutes of higher education) is borne collectively by all local education authorities through a polling system. Up until the financial year 1980/81, the size of the 'pool' of funds was determined retrospectively, and the system thus became characterised as open-ended and lacking in accountability. Rejecting Labour's proposals for a National Body to administer the pool, the Tories decided on the crudest possible solution to the problem and fixed a cash limit on the 1980/81 pool in advance. This move has come to be known as the 'capping of the pool'.

The overall reduction in the size of the pool introduced through its 'capping' means that most colleges will have to make some cuts. But the arbitrary mechanisms which have

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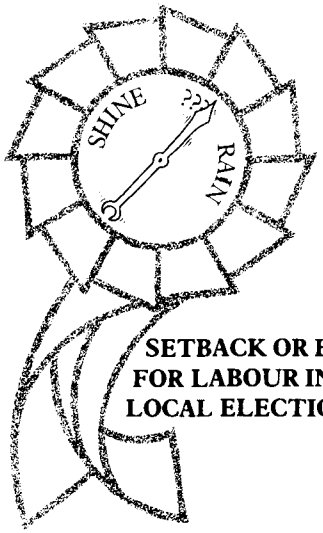
been used to determine the size of the contribution each institution is to receive from the pool has meant that some will suffer substantially more than others. Many colleges have been thrown back onto the good offices of their own LEAs, and have not always been generously received — the refusal by the three (Labour) maintaining authorities to make up the shortfall in the North East London Polytechnic's budget for next year has led to plans for the closure of two faculties, 62 lecturer redundancies, and the winding up of a number of specialist projects (including the Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems, which was established to develop the ideas contained in the Lucas Aerospace workers' Corporate Plan). And if the 'capping' exercise is repeated next year, it will have the effect of freezing and exaggerating already present inequalities.

The effects of policies generated by short-term expenditure considerations are already becoming clear. Access to higher education for students both from home and overseas is being restricted. Real cuts in expenditure, coupled with uncertainty about future income from overseas students' fees and the cost of pay and price rises, will lead to the first contractions in the system and the likelihood of a number of colleges actually having to close in the next few years. The 'capping of the pool', through inflicting a cut on the maintained sector far greater than that suffered by the universities, will accentuate the already divisive split between the two sectors of higher education.

At the same time, problems of planning and control have been made even more acute: how is the 'broad steer' to be introduced? What system should be used to equitably administer the pool? What should be the relationship between the universities and the maintained sector? There has been a remarkable degree of unity among educational interest groups — including University Vice-Chancellors, college Principals, lecturers, non-teaching staffs, and students — in opposing government policies, most notably on overseas students. However, as their various submissions to the House of Commons new Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts have made clear, they are as far away as ever from a consensus as to what direction higher education should move in. The DES itself is somewhat battered by the opposition to the policies it has been forcing through and therefore unlikely to take any new initiatives. It is quite possible that higher education under the Tories will continue to be directed by nothing more imaginative than Treasury dictates.



SETBACK OR BONANZA FOR LABOUR IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS?

The predominant reactions to the outcome of the Metropolitan and non-Metropolitan District Council elections on May 1 this year were relief on the part of the Government that Conservative losses had been relatively light and an affected public optimism about Labour's performance among several party spokesmen — including Roy Hattersley talking on the late-night BBC television programme that reported the early results. However, did these elections really amount to, or even foreshadow, the anti-Tory swing that Labour politicians seek in order to see the party back in office at the next general election? Evidence has recently been adduced from opinion polls that Labour is regaining lost support among those groups of the electorate — particularly skilled manual workers and (even more so) their wives — whose defection to the Tories in the last general election was unusually high, thus producing dramatic anti-Labour swings in supposedly strongly Labour constituencies in parts of the south-east and of the Midlands where these groups were a disproportionate component of the electorate. To what extent do the local election results corroborate this scenario of Labour recovery?

Of course, a fully adequate comparison between results of a general election and those of local elections is frustrated by several well-known practical difficulties. While it is a simple matter in many local-authority areas to aggregate results at the level of individual wards (the area unit at which local elections are fought) into their constituent parliamentary constituencies, some problems in the construction of a proper comparison cannot be fully resolved: the occasional presence of Ratepayer and similar candidacies in local contests; the often uneven distribution of a Liberal presence in local races combined with the further consideration that such candidacies may have a different significance in local as opposed to parliamentary contests; the difference in turnout percentage between local and parliamentary elections, which is usually thought to disadvantage Labour in the former type of race; the fact that some local contests are multi-seat, multi-vote affairs in which a proportion of voters split their ballots or use less than their full entitlement of votes and in which even the major parties (let alone the minor ones) sometimes fail to put forward a full slate of candidates. Recent ward-boundary and associated ward-name changes in numerous local Districts frustrate the aggregation of some ward-level results to the level of the respective parliamentary constituency and, in addition, there were in May 1980 no local elections in the GLC area to permit an examination of voting trends in the metropolis.

Despite the inconvenience of these constraints it is still possible to make some reasonably valid comparisons between the general election results of May 1979 and those in corresponding local elections a year later. Is there, one asks, any indication of a pattern? In fact, one can discern some sort of pattern from which Labour can perhaps derive some partial comfort; even so, the Tories are doubtless justified in feeling that the results as a whole are far less bad for them than they might have been, and for Labour there are some disconcerting exceptions to any overall picture of errant one-time Labour voters returning eagerly if bashfully to the fold.

In the West Midlands, where the Labour Party suffered some of its largest reverses in May 1979, there are indications of some recovery. In Birmingham as a whole the inter-two-party swing to Labour almost restores the position of the party in October 1974. In the Northfield constituency, for example, which contains Longbridge and in May 1979 was the locus of dramatic Labour losses among skilled manual workers, the party held one seat and won back the two others, increasing its percentage of the two-party position with a swing of almost 10 percent — a not unreasonable recovery for a local election contest. However, returns to Labour in Dudley and in Sandwell (containing Warley and West Bromwich) were far less spectacular and in no way managed to restore the *status quo ante* of October 1974. Moreover, the results from Wolverhampton are profoundly troubling for Labour. Here Labour gained two seats from the Conservatives, while the latter won one from a Ratepayers' group, and the Labour success in securing a somewhat precarious majority control of the Council was widely interpreted, both by the national commentators in the media and also by the local

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Labour leadership of the city, as a vindication of the Council's introduction of a 56% rate increase as a response to the Government's cuts and as evidence that most voters were prepared to pay such increases in return for guarantees of continuing levels of municipal service. In fact, some remarkable pro-Tory swings in the Wolverhampton constituencies in May 1979 continued a similar trajectory in the elections on May 1, particularly in Renee Short's North-east constituency, where Labour's two-party percentage of nearly 70% in October 1974 had been reduced to barely 50% by 1980. Nationwide publicity given shortly before this year's local elections to clashes between police and strikers outside the printing offices of the town's newspaper, the *Express & Star*, may not have helped Labour's cause locally, but it remains likely that the rates issue contributed most to this electoral outcome. Labour was able to win its two seats in Wolverhampton (and barely at that) only because it had lost these in the really grim 1976 year of the last government's period of office.

Unfortunately for Labour councils, the party often seems particularly vulnerable to negative reactions from its rate-paying voters when large rate increases are used in an attempt to circumvent the withholding of funds by central government. In early March of this year a council by-election in the Knight's Hill ward of the London Borough of Lambeth, where Labour had confidently expected to gain seats since it needed a two-party swing of less than 3% from the 1978 result, in fact produced a small rise in proportionate Tory support in response to a threatened local rate increase that was subsequently fixed at 49.5% but had been provisionally announced as nearly 60%. Clearly, a part of Labour's electorate needs education on the current dilemmas faced by Labour-controlled local authorities wanting to avoid drastic reductions of municipal service.

Elsewhere in the country any disillusion with the present Government among first-time Tory voters of 1979 has been relatively muted, even if such disillusion exists. In Basildon, where Eric Moonman suffered such dramatic desertions by former Labour voters who were clearly attracted both by the possibility of purchasing their council houses and also by the implied cornucopia of Mrs Thatcher's version of free collective wage bargaining, there has been some return to Labour by voters, though the party's October 1974 position has not really been re-established. In neighbouring Southend, however, doubtless assisted by the knock-on effects of the recent Southend East parliamentary by-election, Labour's proportion of the two-party vote returned to the level of five and six years ago. At the opposite end of the country, in Newcastle upon Tyne and in Sheffield, the evidence for a Labour recovery since 1979 is mixed. However, in Manchester, assisted by the party's solid record of municipal achievement despite some notorious and highly publicised errors over the years in housing and transport policy, Labour not only won but won handsomely; a respectable swing back to the party more than cancelled out what was in any case only a small pro-Tory swing in 1979.

What then is the verdict for the future, especially for that of the Labour Party? Certainly, the experience of one year of Mrs Thatcher's policies has scarcely produced the dramatic counter-reaction that all on the Left had hoped for and that some had firmly expected to see. Labour has regained some lost ground, but one suspects that its support — particularly among the returning skilled manual voters who are so important for any electoral success — remains volatile and susceptible to such contrary influences as large rate increases. The only comfort that Labour can possibly draw from this is that such increases are a local issue and any reaction against them would not necessarily affect the party's performance in a general election. This smacks too much of pious optimism, however.

Although politicians and intellectuals on the Left may wonder why the Thatcher government is not by now more unpopular than it appears, some of the answers are perhaps not hard to seek, especially bearing in mind the proven pragmatic nature and low political sophistication of at least a large minority of the British electorate. The political culture of this country works in favour of the Conservatives and it is no accident that over the years since the last war the depths of their unpopularity when in government have seldom equalled the corresponding Labour ones. Symptomatic of the general difficulty on this score faced by the Labour Party and by the Left as a whole is the widespread and longstanding hostility to trade unions, even among Labour voters; one recent poll has shown that a substantial majority of the electorate believe trade unions to have negative effects on the well-being of the country and there is a high level of stated approval among voters for the Thatcher government's recent proposals on trade-union reform.

Other factors — apparently ephemeral but nonetheless significant — prevented any real Labour benefit in the case of the recent local elections, for they coincided with some slight recovery since the start of the year in the popularity of the Government and of Mrs Thatcher personally and they were held barely a month after Geoffrey Howe's announcement of a budget that so succeeded in avoiding public hostility that well over a half of the public were subsequently found to regard it as 'fair'. Shortly after any budget is announced both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the government that he represents can invariably gain a few percentage points of implied support and popularity merely on the basis of public appearance and visibility. Only budgets containing proposals having very obvious short-term negative consequences such as a dramatic and immediate rise in the rate of income tax would be exempt from this political principle. In the local elections Labour merely paid once again the continuing historical price of the pragmatism and low political consciousness of a substantial part of the British electorate. One can only guess whether the probable economic reverses of the near future will be sufficient to break down such a longstanding political disposition. However, the fact that after a full year of crude monetarism and of its increasingly obvious economic and social costs Labour has made what amounts to a fairly modest electoral comeback does not encourage optimism on this score.

Finally, a postscript on a very different aspect of the local elections: the National Front, which in past years has sought to maximise its candidate coverage in local-election contests, presented few candidates, almost all of whom gained well under 5% of votes cast in their contests. The NF ran barely twenty candidates in all the twenty-two Districts of Greater Manchester, West Midlands, and West Yorkshire, areas where its coverage in the past has been heaviest. Even so, there were one or two disconcerting aspects about the performance of the far right: two (albeit very unsuccessful) NF candidates in Oldham, where the Front in the past has not presented any candidates at all; and the presence of British Movement candidates in three of Birmingham's forty-two wards. True, only one of these three exceeded 100 votes (139, in fact, and 2.4% of those cast in the ward concerned), but merely the readiness and ability of the BM to present three candidates are troubling.

Contributors: **John Wells, Martin Stott, Chris Husbands**

Error

The title of the contribution in the Focus section of the June issue of Marxism Today should have read: Talbot — A New Name in Anti-unionism.

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Ian Gough

Thatcherism and the Welfare State

Britain is experiencing the most far-reaching experiment in 'new right' politics in the western world.

'Minister, how exactly will shutting down old peoples' homes revitalise the British economy?'
(Robin Day in a radio interview with a Conservative government minister)

The British welfare state is under attack today, that much is clear. But why? What is the nature of the attack? How does the 'new conservatism' of the Thatcher government differ from the 'traditional Toryism' of Macmillan and Heath? What is the link between the Government's monetarist economic policies and their anti-welfarism? And will either work? These are some of the questions I want briefly to tackle here.

The cuts

The current crisis in the welfare state has a quantitative and a qualitative dimension. Let us look at each in turn. Since the mid-1970s first a Labour then a Tory government have successfully attempted to restrain the previously rapid growth of expenditure on the major social services (see table). Between 1975/6 and 1977/8 the Labour government cut back housing and education spending, held spending on personal social services constant and thereby stabilised total social expenditure. The newly instituted cash limit system clearly did its work, especially in cutting back these local authority provided services.

A slight easing of controls on social spending occurred in the last year of the Labour government permitting an increase of 2% overall (after allowing for the switch from child tax allowances to child benefit — a quite spurious 'increase' in social security outlays). Planned spending for the next year (1979/80) allowed for virtually no growth and marked a switch in the target of cuts from the locally provided services to the centrally provided social security and health system. Though the Tories' June 1979 Budget made further immediate cuts in the housing and education programme, raised prescription charges and cut back on employment services for that year, the plans for this next squeeze on social spending had already been decided on by the outgoing Labour government.

Social Expenditure in the UK: % increases at constant 1979 prices

	1975/6 –77/8 (2 years)	1977/8 –78/9	1978/9 –79/80	Planned 1979/80 –80/1	Planned 1980/1 –82/3 (2 years)
Social security	8.3	9.7(3.6)*	3.6(–0.7)*	2.4	0.7
National health service	2.0	2.6	0.0	2.7	2.1
Personal social services	0.4	3.7	3.3	–6.6	3.9
Education	–4.0	2.2	1.4	–4.5	–4.1
Housing	–12.4	–5.1	2.2	–12.5	–30.9
Total social services	0.6	4.5(1.8)	2.2(0.4)	–1.2	–3.4
Total public expenditure	–6.5	6.0(4.5)	4.1(3.1)	–0.7	–3.8

Source: *Public Expenditure White Paper Cmnd 7841, March 1980.*

*The social security figures for 1978/9 and 1979/80 are spuriously inflated due to the switch from a combination of family allowances and child tax allowances to child benefit. The figures in brackets in these columns are a rough attempt to exclude the impact of this change.

Then in November 1979 and March 1980 the Thatcher government took two more swings of the axe against the welfare state and determined a real fall in its resources for 1980/81. Once again housing, education and the personal social services are the prime targets, though social security is further squeezed. Even more far-reaching cuts are planned for the next two years. Of course the immediate impact on many services is often worse than the crude averages suggest. For example the growing number of elderly people in the population means that personal services such as home helps need to rise by 2% each year just to keep pace. So even a standstill on expenditure results in a sharp fall in the quality of many social services. Furthermore the planned cuts for this year assume an inflation rate of 16½% which is an obvious underestimate. If the Government sticks to its cash limits the real impact on services will be much worse than the table suggests.

The Conservatives' intention progressively to reduce resources for the social services marks a new approach: previous expenditure plans by the Labour government anticipated a further growth after the 'temporary' cuts which were necessitated by the economic crisis. Nevertheless it is important to stress that this quantitative attack on the welfare state was initiated by the Wilson/Callaghan administrations in 1975: the Conservative policy is simply more (or rather less) of the same. In turning to the qualitative shifts in policy we see more clearly the distinctive ideological reversal championed by the Thatcher administration.

The ideological attack

Its policy changes include the following. Sitting council house tenants have the right to buy their house at very large discounts, council rents are going up sharply (which will further 'encourage' the sale of council houses), new housing programmes are pared to the bone and new controls are to be introduced over councils' direct works departments. In education the trend to comprehensives will be halted, overseas student fees will be linked to their full economic cost and the new assisted places scheme will provide more public money for private schools. And in social security the recent Budget marks the most important attack on social rights since the war: benefits to strikers' families are cut by £12 a week, 'short-term' benefits for the sick,

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unemployed and disabled are deliberately cut by raising them only 11½% this year and by taxing them in subsequent years, increases in child benefits are postponed, and earnings-related short-term benefits will be abolished (but not earnings-related contributions). Even state pensioners will suffer a fall in real income since the rise of 16½% will undoubtedly fall short of price increases.

Drawing together the threads of these policies, we see a major attempt to reprivatise parts of the welfare state (housing, education), higher charges on consumers (health, housing), and in social security explicit decisions to weaken the organised working class, to widen the gap between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' claimants and to encourage work incentives (at the same time that some employment schemes are eliminated and unemployment will escalate). This is not to mention the encouragement of police and law and order services, or the overt attack on progressive education. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the welfare state is attacked by the new conservatism at least as much for ideological as for economic reasons. Some of their policies (the assisted places scheme, possibly council house sales) will *raise* net costs to the Exchequer.

RESTRUCTURING THE WELFARE STATE UNDER THATCHER

In The Political Economy of the Welfare State[1] I argued:

> 'There are four ways amongst others in which the state, acting in the long-term interests of capital, may seek to restructure the welfare state at a time of economic crisis like the present: by adapting policies to secure more efficient reproduction of the labour force, by shifting emphasis to the social control of destabilising groups in society, by raising productivity within the social services and possibly by reprivatising parts of the welfare state.'

However I also argued that this process of restructuring needs to be situated within an overall strategy for counteracting the crisis, and that there were, in Britain today, two alternative capitalist strategies available: the radical right strategy and the 'corporatist' strategy. The Labour administrations of 1974-79 practised a degenerated form of

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corporatism increasingly watered down with various monetarist elements. In the 1979 election a clear choice was expressed (at least in the southern half of England) for an undiluted form of the right wing strategy. But what are the crucial elements of the 'new conservatism' and how have they affected the restructuring of the welfare state?

In answering this question I am drawing on some previous articles in *Marxism Today*. Peter Leonard[2] has explored different ways in which this restructuring takes place under social democracy and under the 'radical right'. Together with earlier articles by Stuart Hall[3] and Andrew Gamble,[4] he emphasises the specific role of political and ideological elements in this particular response to the contemporary crisis of British capitalism. I wish to consider the links between these and the Tories' economic strategy analysed by Michael Bleaney.[5]

According to Hall and Gamble, Thatcherism is a political formation that combines the principles of the 'social market economy' with a new 'authoritarian populism'. The social market economy represents a return to some of the precepts of nineteenth century liberalism; a limited role for government, an emphasis on the responsibilities of the individual and so forth. In Britain and the Anglo-Saxon world generally this has taken the form of a resurgence of monetarism as advocated by Milton Friedman. Populism represents an appeal to national interests which are supposedly above class interests, drawing on the ideology of a neutral market place working in the interests of all. In its attack on immigrants, welfare recipients and unions, for example, it stresses the need for a strong state to represent national over sectional interests, though Thatcherism clearly differs from a

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truly authoritarian movement. Crudely speaking then Thatcherism = monetarism + authoritarian populism, though the two threads of this ideology clearly complement each other.

The centrality of the welfare state

What is striking for our purposes is the position of the welfare state at the heart of these two strands. The welfare state is the central target for the radical right on both counts. First, because it allegedly generates even higher tax levels, budget deficits, disincentives to work and save, and a bloated class of unproductive workers. Second, because it encourages 'soft' attitudes towards crime, immigrants, the idle, the feckless, strikers, the sexually aberrant and so forth. Economic prescriptions and populist incantations are harnessed together, and their prime target is the expanded sphere of state responsibility, state regulation and state-provided benefits which constitute the modern welfare state. As Hall stresses, this new right ideology did not appear out of thin air; it needed to be constructed, though it utilised existing elements. And, as Gamble shows, it had to be welded into a party political programme which could be electorally successful.

The process of restructuring the welfare state can now be situated within the political formation of the radical right. First, the *quantitative* role of cuts follows from the precepts of monetarism: strict control of the money supply, a substantial reduction in the level of government expenditure and taxation and a shift towards indirect taxation. A reduction in the public sector borrowing requirement is a key object of policy because of its impact on the money supply (or on interest rates if government securities are to be sold to the non-banking sector). Given the commitment to lower tax levels in order to encourage incentives to work and invest, this must involve even faster cuts in public spending. Given the commitment to higher defence spending, this must involve still greater cuts in social and economic expenditures. This has as another aim the weakening of the power of organised labour via higher rates of unemployment (and the threat of still higher levels if wage claims are 'excessive'). The goal is to use market forces (together with new legal restrictions) to reduce real wages and augment profits. A cut in the 'social wage', for example reducing housing subsidies or personal social services, augments this pressure to reduce labour's share in the national income. It thus provides an indirect route to encourage profitability and re-investment in British industry, even if a sound monetarist government like the present one disclaims any responsibility for the national rate of economic growth.

Second, the *qualitative* shifts in social policy are designed to re-assert individualism, self-reliance and family responsibility, and to reverse the collective social provision of the post-war era. Present attempts to impose a national curriculum and 'raise standards' in public education provide a striking example of the social programme of the new conservatism. In many ways, though not all, these qualitative shifts complement the absolute cuts in expenditure: cutting social benefits to working age adults saves money and panders to the anti-scrounger mentality of the new populism. Together these two sets of forces have generated the most sustained attack on the

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welfare state since the war. The restructuring of the welfare state has begun in earnest.

WELFARE UNDER CAPITALISM

To understand why the welfare state is under attack today, we must first understand why it developed so markedly this century and in particular since the Second World War. This section summarises the analysis developed at greater length in my book. The welfare state in modern capitalist countries comprises public cash benefits (such as pensions), public benefits in kind (such as education), public regulation of the activities of individuals and corporations (such as consumer or labour legislation) and the taxation system. This complex of measures serves two major goals: the reproduction of labour-power, and the maintenance and control of the non-working population. Both involve quantitative and qualitative aspects; the state ensures directly or indirectly a minimum level of consumption for different groups in the population, and at the same time it modifies the pattern of socialisation, behaviour and abilities within the population. Since it is a capitalist welfare state it imposes sanctions and controls at the same time that it provides benefits (take council housing, for example, or education or supplementary benefit).

These goals can be grouped together and constitute *the state organisation of social reproduction*. As Engels pointed out, reproduction is just as essential an activity in all societies as production. The process of social reproduction refers to the processes of biological reproduction, of economic consumpton and of socialisation: in short to the way individuals as social beings are 'produced' rather than goods and services in the process of production. Of course the family has played, and continues to play, a crucial function here, but when we refer to the state organisation of social reproduction we are referring to the way the welfare state has modified and partially supplemented the family in the twentieth century. From supplementary benefit to child care officers the welfare state today is intimately involved in this process. But our definition also reminds us how contentious this process is: after all the radical right are questioning precisely the respective roles of state, family and market in the sphere of social reproduction.

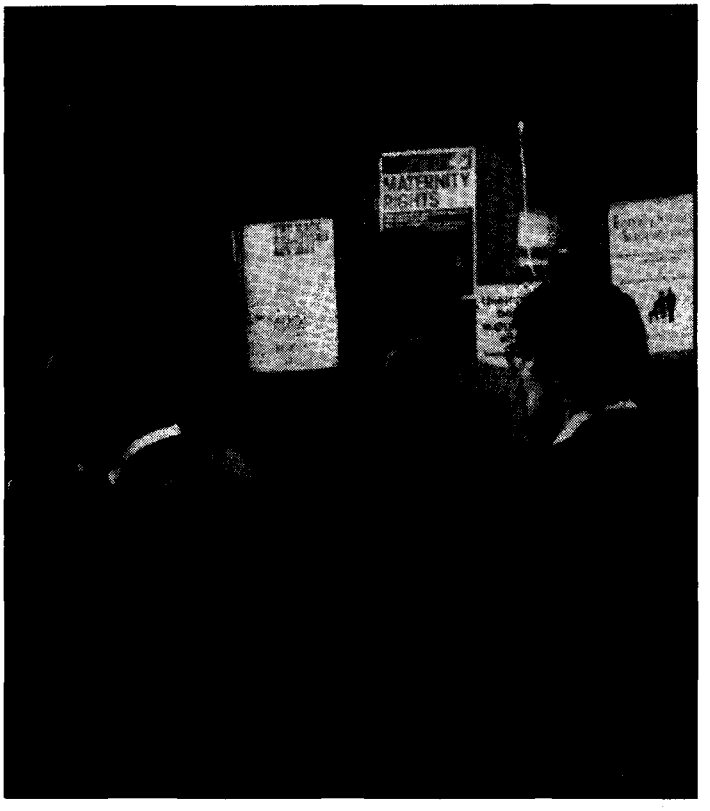
Reproduction is only one of the activities of the modern capitalist state. Modifying James O'Connor's analysis in his book *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*[6] we can identify three broad functions that it performs:

1. accumulation
2. reproduction
3. legitimation/repression

The first refers to all the means by which the state tries to maintain favourable conditions for the accumulation of capital. The third refers to the means by which it attempts to maintain social order and social control whilst at the same time trying to preserve social harmony and avoid harmful conflict (harmful, that is, to the state and private capital). Social policies clearly have implications for these other goals of the modern state: for example some policies (like the redundancy payments scheme or parts of higher education) are designed to achieve economic benefits for the private sector; whilst others (such as some aspects of education) perform a social control job, and many help to legitimise the system and reduce dissension in society. So the welfare state is involved in all three areas of activity, though I would argue its prime concern is with maintaining and adapting social reproduction.

The welfare state: the outcome of conflict

But this does no more than provide a framework for understanding particular social policies such as those of the Thatcher government. In fact it scarcely does this, for there is a danger in the above account of



explaining the modern welfare state in terms of the *functions* that it performs in capitalist society — the danger, in short, of a crudely functionalist account. But class conflict, in particular pressure from the organised working class, has played a major role in the origins and spread of welfare services. Indeed for many the British welfare state is the child of the labour movement and the post-war Labour government. How can this be reconciled with the role that, we have argued, it plays in securing capital accumulation, social reproduction and political legitimation?

The brief answer is that the welfare state is the vector of two sets of political forces: 'pressure from below' and 'reform from above'. The first refers to the myriad ways in which class movements together with social and community movements demand social reforms to protect or extend their interests. This may result from pressure group politics within the state at one extreme to direct action and street conflict at the other. 'Reform from above' refers to the various ways in which the state seeks to implement social reform which will serve the longer-term economic, social and political interests of capital, or particualar sections of capital. The state does not automatically perform this job: it requires at the least the executive and administrative wherewithall and a form of political mobilisation. I believe these are more readily available the more centralised is the apparatus of the state. The stronger is the role of the executive and senior civil service *vis-a-vis* parliament, for example, the more can they override short-term pressures from representatives of particular capitalist interests and impose a longer-term, more class-oriented strategy.

I would argue that these two sets of forces have *both* strengthened,

[1] I Gough, *The Political Economy of the Welfare State*, Macmillan, 1979.
[2] P Leonard, 'Restructuring the Welfare State: from social democracy to the radical right', *Marxism Today*, Dec 1979.
[3] S Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show', *Marxism Today*, Jan 1979.
[4] A Gamble, 'The Decline of the Conservative Party', *Marxism Today*, Nov 1979.
[5] M Bleaney, 'The Tories' economic stratgy', *Marxism Today*, Nov 1979.
[6] J O'Connor, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*, St James Press, 1973.

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and partially reinforced one another, over the last 40 years particularly in Britain. Their interaction led to two especially notable periods of social reform in the 1940s and the 1960s. During the Second World War the foundations of the Keynesian-welfare state were established. Though many of the reforms were enacted by the post-war Attlee government, it is notable that most were the product of the war-time coalition government (the Beveridge report, the Butler Education Act). They represented the outcome of pressures from below — war-time radicalisation and a spirit of 'no going back to the Thirties' — plus reforming drives from above — a recognition of the political and economic necessity of greater state responsibility for economic performance, notably through Keynesian demand management techniques. Thus in Britain Keynes and Beveridge represented a linked response to the pre-war crisis focusing respectively on demand management (part, but only part, of the economic sphere) and the sphere of social reproduction. Together they formed the core of the 'post-war settlement' between capital and labour which was to prove so successful a basis for post-war prosperity.

The 60s and 70s

The 1960s and early 1970s saw a second wave of reforms as social and economic policy was slowly restructured in the face of a faltering rate of accumulation in Britain. The development of incomes policies, industrial strategies, the modification of Beveridge's social security principles, the expansion of higher education: all these represented a further extension of state intervention and a closer gearing of economic and social policy. Again there were pressures from below, from a labour movement of greater defensive economic strength, and from newer social and community movements; and pressures from above as reformers and spokesmen for capital understood the limited role of Keynesian policies and advocated more systematic economic and social intervention in order to restructure British capital in the face of overseas competition, domestic class pressures and a falling rate of profit. Again, though the Labour election victory in 1964 signalled the shift in direction, many of the individual reforms had been initiated in the last years of the previous Conservative administration.

So the British welfare state represents the outcome of growing working class pressure for economic and social reforms, modified by the desire of a more centralised state apparatus to restructure economic and social policies for its own reasons. In part the post-war Keynesian-welfare state generated its own momentum for further state intervention, to secure economic growth and capital accumulation within a new balance of class forces that it had itself helped to shape. It follows from this that the development of Keynesian economic policy and modern social policy were interlinked and formed the two central planks of the post-war political consensus between the parties. It therefore comes as no surprise to find that both planks are simultaneously under attack from the new radical right.

THE WELFARE STATE AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

But what, if any, is the link between an expanded welfare state and a declining economy? Is the British economic crisis the result of an overgrown public sector, as the present Government would have it, or are the two unconnected? My own view is that there is a link, but that it is not so straightforward or unambiguous as the new conservatism suggests. After all a recent EEC report showed that government spending as a share of GDP is lower in the UK than any other country in the EEC. On the other hand socialist reformers and others who deny any link and who reiterate Keynesian nostrums about the need for more public spending in order to pull us out of recession do a disservice to the socialist movement. The Keynesian welfare state *has*

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generated new contradictions working as it is within the framework of a private capitalist economy. It is not possible for state spending to rise inexorably as a share of GNP without adverse consequences for its domestic capital. What then are these limits?

In general the impact of the welfare state on capitalist economy will depend on the answers to several questions, in particular the following:

1. Who pays the taxes? In answering this we must recognise that both capital and labour possess the means of trying to pass on higher taxes — via higher prices or higher pre-tax wages.
2. On what criteria are social benefits distributed? Are they predominantly distributed on some criterion of need, or do they take into account the labour market position of men and women, the impact on work incentives, and so forth? In other words do social policies *subvert* or *complement* the mechanism of the market?

Generally speaking, the impact of welfare policies on capital accumulation will be more favourable the more they are paid for by taxes on labour rather than capital, the more they follow market criteria in distributing and awarding benefits, and the more closely are social and economic policies integrated. But of course the more social policies are shifted in this direction, the more they may interfere with social reproduction and political legitimation.

The impact on British capitalism

In the light of this what has been the impact of the welfare state on British capitalism? Two peculiar facts about Britain must be borne in mind in answering this question. First, the position of Britain within the world economy is a declining one, and the deep-seated weaknesses of our economic structure are now super-imposed on a world-wide recession which has marked the end of the post-war boom. Second, the defensive economic strength of the British trade union movement has prevented the strategy of industrial restructuring attempted by Labour and Conservative administrations since the early 1960s from being successfully implemented (Purdy, Jacques).[7] This defensively strong, decentralised labour movement with extensive shop-floor organisation has also hindered the restructuring of the welfare state. Unlike the USA, Britain has a developed set of social services available in the main for the whole population rather than certain privileged strata within it. But unlike Sweden and West Germany for example these are not closely integrated with economic policy to achieve greater mobility of labour or to encourage labour force participation. Council housing policy, for example, may well restrict the mobility of labour demanded by capital and interfere with the operation of labour markets. Furthermore British unions managed to maintain their members' post-tax incomes in the face of slow growth, rising tax levels and periodic incomes policies at least until the mid-1970s. But again unlike Sweden this was not achieved by means of a corporatist-style social contract which would yield some tangible benefits to capital. In an environment of relative economic decline, it is likely that the British welfare system has contributed to the British economic crisis by exacerbating inflation and undermining market mechanisms. But these very features stem from the particular ways social policy has developed in post-war Britain, outlined above.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that monetarist and populist attacks on the welfare state have established themselves here. Given the failure of Keynesianism, and the progressive degeneration of the

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Labour governments' corporatist experiments after the 1974 Social Contract, a vacuum opened up which first Powell, then Thatcher, Joseph *et al* were quick to exploit. The defeat of the Left in the EEC referendum of 1975 under a Labour government helped prepare the ground for this move to the right. The indigenous populist ideology, analysed by Hall and Gamble; the reluctance of British capital to opt for Continental-style interventionism; and the failure of the Labour leadership to develop an alternative strategy to replace the wilting nostrums of Keynesianism, all left the way open for a tax-welfare backlash culminating in the victory of the new conservatism in the last election. The Left is also implicated in its failure to unify around some coherent transitional strategy as an alternative to both Labour reformism and the new conservatism. The alternative economic strategy adopted at the Labour Party conference in 1973 represented an important stage in this process of re-thinking. But as Hodgson[8] has argued it was conceived by the left of the Labour Party, in particular the Tribune group, as a Parliamentary policy without the need for mobilisation at the local level, which emasculated its socialist content and meant that it differed little from corporatist-style interventionism.

The result is that Britain is experiencing the most far-reaching experiment in 'new right' politics in the Western world. The Thatcher government alone has received Milton Friedman's blessing. Its underlying aim is to attack the labour movement on the economic and ideological fronts. The policy shifts outlined earlier on can all be seen to contribute to this aim: legal sanctions against unions, mass unemployment by means of tight monetary controls, the cutting of social benefits for the families of strikers, a reduction in the social wage on several fronts, and a shift to more authoritarian practices in the welfare field. It represents one coherent strategy for managing the British crisis, a strategy aimed at the heart of the post-war Keynesian-welfare state settlement.

THE FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR THATCHERISM

Will it work? In trying to answer this question, I will address in turn each of the three functions of the state mentioned earlier on.

1. *Accumulation*. All economic forecasters now agree that the prospects for the British economy until at least 1983 are grim. *The Economist* (Feb 2-8, 1980) — by no means the most gloomy — predicts by 1981 a fall of 2½% in GDP, manufacturing investment down by 12½%, unemployment up to 2 million according to the Government's downward-biased measure, inflation still well into double figures and a current account deficit, North Sea oil notwithstanding, of £3 billion. The Cambridge Economic Policy Group forecast is still more pessimistic, predicting an 8% fall in real GDP from 1979-81. Thus the deflationary monetarist policies of the present Government hardly provide the basis for a recovery in profitability and capital accumulation in the short to medium term: instead they are making matters much worse.

The cuts in social expenditure will have an impact not only on the recipients of the services, but on sections of private capital as well. So far it is capital spending that has borne the brunt of the cuts, so that government demand for the output of the construction industry for example has fallen dramatically. The new cuts announced recently will only exacerbate this problem. One half of NHS expenditure for example consists of purchases from the private and nationalised sectors (drugs, supplies, oil, electricity), so that government cuts here directly harm private industry. Even if the Government manages to impose its future cuts on transfer payments, public sector employment and wage and salary levels, this will still have a multiplier effect on private sector output. The Chancellor's intention to reduce public sector borrowing sharply to £8½ billion in 1980, only 3¾% of GDP, will exacerbate the already deep recession.

How can it happen that a policy intentionally designed to revitalise British capitalism should have this opposite effect? It stems from a contradiction within the accumulation process long ago noted by Marx. For capital accumulation to proceed two conditions must be fulfilled: first, profits must be produced by successfully exploiting labour within the production process; second, these profits must then be realised by the exchange of commodities in the circulation process. These two movements of the process are now in contradiction. Keynesian policies by sustaining aggregate demand overcame the inter-war crisis of underconsumption but have over the long-term contributed to a falling rate of profit and undermined the production of surplus value. In reaction to this the present Government is attempting to alter the class balance of forces to raise the rate of exploitation, but in so doing it will worsen in the short-term the domestic conditions for realising this surplus value. That is, a deflationary policy results in excess capacity and falling profit margins (unless exports can rise to make up the loss, a scenario that looks increasingly unlikely). In short, higher government spending facilitates the realisation of profits in the short term, but interferes with their production of profits in the longer term whereas cuts in spending may aid the production of profits in the longer term, but at their short-term expense. The conclusion is that an approach relying on market forces to expand accumulation in the longer-term worsens its prospects on the short to medium term.

Reproduction

2. *Reproduction*. The new conservatism believes that the welfare state, the state organisation of social reproduction, has proceeded too far, that individual and family responsibility are undermined by this

[7] D Purdy, 'British capitalism since the war', *Marxism Today*, Sept 1976. M Jacques, 'Thatcherism: the impasse broken?', *Marxism Today*, Oct 1979.
[8] G Hodgson, *Socialist Economic Strategy*, ILP Square One Publications, 1979.

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process and need to be restored. But to what extent can this twentieth century process be put into reverse? In my view the problems generated by a substantial dismantling of welfare services would be great, a fact reflected in the hesitancy even of this Government in implementing spending cuts in, for example, the health service. First, it would throw a greater burden back on individual families and in particular the women within them. (Moroney[9] documents the enormous burden borne by, for example, middle-aged women in caring for their elderly relatives.) But rising numbers of conventional nuclear families are breaking up in divorse and a growing proportion of them are not being reconstituted. The numbers of children living with single parents is increasing, adding to the demand for, for instance, supplementary benefit. Furthermore the women's movement is now a force capable of resisting some of the more overt

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attempts at a 'back to the family' approach, as its recent success in deflecting attempts to retract the abortion laws testifies. Second, social needs are not something objectively identifiable; they are interpreted and new needs engendered in the process of class and social conflict. Community-based movements such as Womens Aid or law centres have helped recognise and define previously personal problems as new social needs. So too have state social services, as when the introduction of the NHS in 1948 revealed a large unmet need for medical services. These discoveries are not easily unlearnt and the gains in social provision not easily reversed.

Thatcherism, in attacking the Keynesian-welfare state couplet, thus risks regenerating many of the problems these policies were initially designed to overcome; mass unemployment, renewed poverty (particularly amongst children), uneven regional development and urban decay amongst others. But it will be attempting to reverse a process that has generated an entirely different environment to that of the thirties. Two factors have changed: expectations for social provision now exist amongst a majority of the population; and new movements exist, premised on the welfare state, to extend and defend existing social and community provision.

A hazardous operation

3. *Legitimation/repression*. The present Government seeks legitimacy for its policies in the ideologies of economic realism and authoritarian populism, but these may prove to be a fragile basis, for several reasons. First the purely electoral consequences are hazardous because, as we noted above, the immediate impact of the policies is to worsen recession and unemployment and to lower real incomes. Some monetarists appreciate that the long time-span of their policies conflicts with the election cycle of liberal democracies, and either bemoan the constraints this imposes on 'sound' government policies (something missing after all in the Chilean monetarist experiment) or conduct a vigorous ideological offensive to convince the electorate that theirs is the only sure way forward. But pressure is building up on the Thatcher government from within the Conservative Party to moderate its monetarist zeal, if not yet to undertake a U-turn. Second, one fifth of the labour force is employed by central and local government and has a direct interest in maintaining the level of public expenditure and employment. Furthermore a majority of the population are consumers in one way or another of social services and many will resent falling standards in their particular sector, even if supporting the Government's broad objectives. Third, fears are growing (witness the post-mortems held on the Bristol riot) about the threats to law and order and the growth of widening social divisions and conflict which present social policies will exacerbate. Growing numbers of unemployed school leavers, or the ghettoisation of the council house estates remaining after the sale of the better local authority housing, are two examples of the political dangers in dismantling socially-provided services too far. It is true that the Government is developing a more repressive strategy in some areas of the welfare services and in its law and order policies generally, but the harm to its legitimacy should not be underestimated particularly if major opposition to its policies develops amongst those most affected by them. Lastly, the attempt by the Thatcher government deliberately to depoliticise areas of social life by disclaiming government responsibility and returning them to the anonymity of the market may itself be politically unacceptable. After several decades in which the state has accepted responsibility for the rate of unemployment, it is hazardous for it now to claim that it has been powerless all along.

TOWARDS A LEFT ALTERNATIVE

I have tried to suggest some of the problems which Thatcherism is likely to encounter in the near future. In the process I am conscious that I have underplayed many of the strengths of Thatcherism as a political movement recently emphasised by Hall and Leonard: the contradictions inherent in the traditional social democracy of the Labour Party; the popular appeal of anti-collectivist anti-state sentiments given the experience of the state (including its welfare apparatus) as a bureaucratic, oppressive imposition; the ability to tap resentment against what Hall labels the '1968' movement for greater democracy and personal freedom. But to list these resources of the new conservatism is not to demonstrate that they will necessarily succeed as a political movement.

However a clear message emerges from the above: the future prospects of the conservative Right depend in great part on the alternatives offered by the Left. Given the bankruptcy of Keynesian/welfare state reformism, the choice offered by the Right is between a step back towards the new conservatism or a further step forward in state interventionism along right corporatist or centralist lines. It is important to recognise that there is nothing inherently socialist in further state intervention and that either option will threaten some of the political and social rights established since the war. It is also important in opposing both strategies to recognise the contradictory

> the future prospects of the conservative Right depend in great part on the alternatives offered by the Left.

nature of the contemporary welfare state: it signals a collective responsibility for meeting an array of social problems and social needs certainly, but it achieves this through a process of centralisation in which social policies are deformed and adapted to suit the requirements of capital and to minimise democratic control.

The need is to move beyond the traditional politics of the Labour Party by harnessing the Labour movement to the social, community, women's and other democratic movements that have partly developed in and against the welfare state. But secondly to combine this with an alternative economic strategy to be implemented by a future left government at the national level. An urgent task in both respects is to develop a parallel alternative *social* strategy, that will propose new priorities for social policy together with new forms of implementing and controlling it. Insofar as this is not achieved, the Thatcherist strategy, despite its problems outlined above, could win by default. □

[9] R Moroney, *The Family and the State*, Longman, 1976.

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Dismantling the Health Service

Steve Iliffe

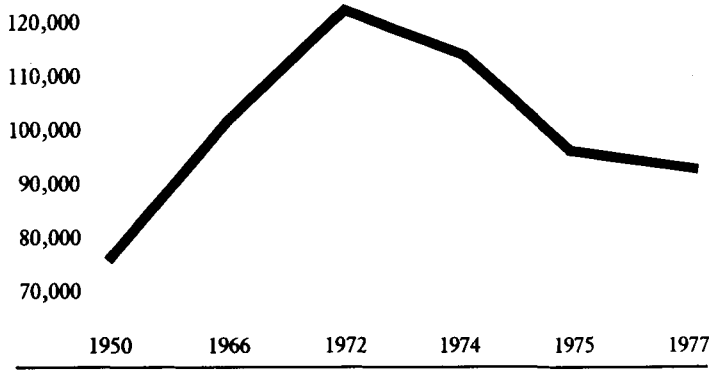
If the NHS is the 'jewel in Labour's Crown' it is also the great test of Conservatism. Should the National Health Service be dismantled and replaced by some sort of market-oriented medicine, the Conservatives will have achieved two things: the destruction of the most politically important of all the institutions of the Welfare State; and convincing proof of the labour movement's fundamental inability to dominate social development.

The present Conservative government may well fail this test, but there is no guarantee of this, nor any reason why a successor might not pass. The politics of health may be a relatively unknown field to Conservatism, but the labour movement which created the present NHS has little understanding of the issues either. However guarded the Cabinet may be about its capacity to dismantle socialised medicine, its immediate opponents are so weakened by reformist and Fabian thought and practice that the political initiative still lies firmly with the Right. Our fortune is that the Right does not know how to proceed, is unsure of its ground, and fears an overwhelmingly hostile response to any attempt to destroy the National Health Service. By force of circumstance, rather than force of opposition, the Government must move slowly and quietly if it wants to replace our present system of health care with some variety of private medicine.

The goal of the present Government is clear; they wish to see market forces dominate the development of health care as far as possible. Within the ideology of Conservatism, responsibility for health is to become personal rather than social.[1,2]

Such a grand design must overcome substantial obstacles: the small size of the existing private medical sector, and its financial instability; the scope of the service provided by the NHS, and the pervasiveness of its institutions; the size of the NHS labour force and its influence.

Figure 1
Patients treated in pay beds in England and Wales



Source: Michael Lee, *Private and National Health Services*, London, Policy Studies Institute, 1978

The factors favouring the Conservative attack are less impressive: the presence of a willing ally in a section (potentially a majority) of the medical profession; the deterioration in the standards of care given by the NHS; and the precedent created by the long-tolerated parasitism practised by the drugs industry.

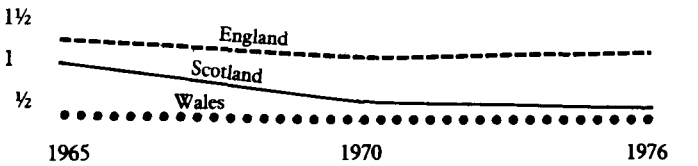
The Conservative strategy, as far as it can be assessed, is directed at stabilising the private sector, diminishing the scope of NHS activity through cuts and cash limits, and shifting certain (profitable) areas of health care into the private sector. The Government will take a 'firm line' on industrial relations within the NHS, aiming to weaken trade unionism and solidarity generally by limiting trade union rights and turning one group of health workers against another. The medical profession (and professions like nursing) will be given more influence in planning development and allocating resources, and doctors will be encouraged to act as the link between private and public services. Finally, declining standards in NHS care that have been caused by cuts imposed by this (and previous) governments will be used as evidence of the failure of state intervention and the superiority of private enterprise.

THE OBSTACLES TO CONSERVATIVE STRATEGY

There is no part of the welfare state that reaches more people of such varied ages, races and social classes within British society than the health service. The client-groups for public housing, public education, personal social services, welfare benefits, and even public transport are restricted by comparison with the population in contact with the health service. Each day of the year an average of 100,000 people attend hospital accident and emergency departments. Each year there are about nine million *new* attendances at out-patient clinics. Each year each person makes an average of three visits to their general practitioner.[3] Those people exclude the contacts people have with maternity services, health visitors, district nurses and clinic doctors. In terms of volume of contact between people and institutions, the NHS is a pervasive and enormous influence. Its provision of services free at the time of need (even when limited by charges), of a comprehensive range of services (however badly distributed), and of its continuity of care (however inefficient) make it a living and accepted example of a socialist institution.

An important aspect of the acceptability of socialised health care to a wide cross-section of social classes is that it is an open-access system, with no financial barrier to consultation with a health worker (whether the worker be doctor, nurse, health visitor, midwife) although there may be such a barrier to treatment (eg, prescription charges).[4] Such open access is crucial when the whole realm of illness and health is such a mystery, such an unknown issue, for everyone. The inability of an individual accurately and realistically to predict his/her future needs for medical care makes insurance-based health services very inadequate. None of the private medical insurance schemes[5] can ensure against all eventualities; a health service financed out of general taxation and catering for the whole population can cope with almost all medical requirements, even if it cannot always accommodate the

Figure 2
Pay beds as a percentage of total beds in NHS hospitals



Source: *Report* of the Royal Commission on the NHS, 1979

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scale of need.[6] All systems of health care that depend on individuals making decisions about how to use their personal resources fail because an informed decision about future need is impossible.[7]

Finally, the rivals to socialised health care are unimpressive. Strictly private medicine, in the form of private hospitals and pay beds in NHS hospitals has been small scale since the formation of the NHS (Tables 1 and 2).

Not only has the scale of private hospital in-patient care been small, but its scope has been narrow and largely restricted to non-urgent surgery and investigation of non-urgent problems. There is little financial gain to be made from long-term care, particularly when it involves those whose income is reduced by their disability (the mentally ill and the elderly). Even the chain of privately run nursing homes for the elderly depend on an NHS subsidy, with more than 40% of the 27,000 nursing home places being occupied by people referred from and paid for by the NHS.[8]

The private insurance groups

Private medicine conducted outside hospitals, in consulting rooms and GP's surgeries, is in a larger scale, yet still cannot match the enormous scale and range of NHS-population contact. The financial rewards of private medicine are so small that it has remained a tiny proportion of general practitioners' incomes[9], whilst the private practice enjoyed by London specialists in Harley and Wimpole Streets has depended on a massive influx of overseas patients to compensate for a decline in the local market in the mid-seventies.[10] The early 1970s demonstrated the vulnerability of private medicine to general economic change. As personal incomes were squeezed, at the beginning of the economic crisis, the number of individual subscribers to private medical insurance fell. Doctors in private practice responded by cultivating an overseas clientele. The insurance schemes turned to group enrolment as an answer, presenting private medical insurance as a fringe benefit for companies to give their middle-management personnel or offer to their workforce as a part of wage negotiations. The overseas market proved unreliable, as the oil-producing states that sent their citizens to London for medical attention were found to be quick to complain about poor service, and slow to pay. On the other hand the group enrolment schemes of the insurance schemes were effective, producing a 25% increase in subscription between 1971 and 1979, despite the slump in membership in the early seventies. Although the private medical sector recovered from this period of shrinking markets, the instability it demonstrated still haunts the insurance schemes.

CONSERVATIVE ADVANTAGES

The greatest Tory ally in any strategy to promote private medicine at the expense of public services is the medical profession. Whilst only a section of the profession is openly in favour of a partly or totally private health service, and the majority of doctors probably accept the value of the present NHS, the whole definition and conduct of professionalism in medicine leans towards paying for health care. The organisation of the medical profession has evolved from a market-place transaction between patient and doctor over a package of commodities — medical advice and medical treatment. The relationship between doctor and patient, provider and customer, is the central feature of the 'liberal professionalism' of medicine. All the other elements of medical professionalism flow from this source: 'clinical freedom'; 'the doctor-patient relationship'; 'confidentiality'; consultant power over the distribution and provision of services, and the 'individual contractor status' of general practitioners. The right to charge a fee for services (or to waive that fee if so desired) is only one part of the ideology of medicine. State intervention in health care has altered this ideology to some extent by making hospital doctors salaried staff and by bringing general practitioners into a contractual relationship with the NHS. The significance of private practice has become marginal because of this intervention, but the ideology

but the labour movement which created the present NHS has little understanding of the issues either.

remains intact. Private medicine is *defended as a principle* because of its overall significance to medical professionalism, not because of its actual relevance to the work of the majority of doctors. With such a profession at the centre of power in health care, any government actively supporting the growth of private medicine would be acting within the existing ideological framework of medicine. Even if only a minority of the profession actively support the resurgence of private practice, the majority will find that resurgence compatible with their conception of medicine, even if not desirable. This is the Government's greatest asset.

The individuality within medical professionalism has serious consequences for health service activity. Distribution of services and facilities may be determined according to the needs of doctors rather than the requirements of the population, with the most needy areas, classes and individuals getting the least.[11] Medical care may be poorly co-ordinated and unplanned (particularly in general practice), with consequent wastage of time, money and resources. And consumer demand may be allowed to take priority over forward planning and

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[1] Jenkin's inverview with the magazine *Director*.
[2] Vaughan's letter to the BMA, July 1979.
[3] Royal Commission on the NHS Report, pp125-126.
[4] There are some financial barriers to consultation where consultation almost invariably leads to treatment — chiropody and dentistry are examples. The Government intended to introduce charges for eye testing despite the opposition of the opticians, but has been forced by strong pressure to remove this proposal from the Health Services Bill.
[5] The major organisations are British United Provident Association (BUPA), with 73% of the privately insured, and Private Patients Plan (PPP) which has 24%. Nine other small schemes cover the remainder. A detailed account of how the insurance schemes work can be found in *In Defence of the NHS*, Radical Statistics Pamphlet, pp21-22.
[6] An example is renal dialysis; facilities are currently insufficient to meet need, but technically need can be met.
[7] B Abel Smith, *Value for money in health services*, 1976.
[8] *Observer*, Sunday July 8th, 1979.
[9] Taking the GP population as a whole; some are very involved in private medicine, particularly in inner-London.
[10] Ilman, *General Practitioner*, Dec 15th, 1978.
[11] J Tudor Hart, 'Inverse Care Law', *Lancet*, 1971.

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analysis of needs. These are the consequences of the market-orientation of the medical profession, even 70 years after the 1911 Insurance Act initiated state intervention in health care. The promotion of private medicine will lead to the amplification of all these complementary problems.

This does not make a case for an anti-professional attitude to health care. There is no doubt that medical professionalism as it now stands is important to medical care, and relevant to the future. The nature of personal contacts between health workers (not just doctors) and people consulting them is crucial to the maintenance of health and the management of illness. Some system of decision-making involving those with practical experience is essential, but the balance of clinical, planning, service and consumer views and skills is not going to be found in the present combination of professionals and businessmen[12] on health authorities. An alternative view of medicine — as an applied social science dealing with definable problems within a whole population — exists within much of the activity of the NHS, amongst planners and managers as much as amongst doctors, but it has not yet evolved its own ethic or its own political institutions. The powerful conservative wing of the medical profession will do much to prevent such evolution, for 'liberal professonalism', itself a special form of Conservative 'freedom', is the jewel in medicine's crown.

> the population that bears the full burden of the crisis will not be in much of a position to take up private medical services

The impact of cuts

Private medicine, if it is to grow, will need opportunities to expand and justifications for doing so. The successive waves of cuts and cash-limits applied to NHS spending by both Labour and Conservative governments have meant a reduction in services, facilities and staff, and compensatory attempts to increase efficiency and 'productivity' by demanding more of staff and patients alike. The extension of waiting lists for surgery, and waiting times for out-patient appointments, plus the limitations on time for communication and explanation of problems and solutions, are propaganda for the private sector, which can step in and offer its own solutions at a price. As the economic decline proceeds and problems of housing, transport and employment increase, we can expect an increase in the incidence of major physical and mental disorders and a consequent increase in the demands made on health services. There is some evidence that the level of employment has a *direct* effect on patterns of heart disease, overall death rates, admissions to mental hospitals, infant mortality and suicide rates[13]. And there is little doubt that unemployment and housing difficulties are major contributors to serious and widespread pyschological disturbance.[14,15]

Of course the population that bears the full burden of the crisis will not be in much of a position to take up private medical services, for low income will be one of its major problems. Any expansion of the private sector will come because the increasing demand on the NHS will preoccupy the service, particularly as cuts in expenditure reduce the service capacity to respond to demand. The pressure on staff will increase, and the temptations of opting out of the NHS and into the private sector (already noticeable amongst nurses working part-time) will grow. The deterioration in standards and speed of care will also act as an incentive for those not hit hard by the economic crisis to seek alternative forms of health care. In the cities, where health services are costly to run and subject to pruning, hospital closures will deprive local populations of small, nearby (if outdated) District General Hospitals and concentrate facilities on larger, often Teaching, Hospitals[16]. As a result both buildings and staff previously available to the NHS will come onto the market. Over a period of time the private sector may obtain a larger potential clientele[17], trained staff of all categories, and even ready-made facilities.[18]

The drugs industry

The role of market forces in determining the development of health care is already well-established in Britain outside the private medicine field. The pharmaceutical industries have an influence over medical practice that distorts medicine by blatantly presenting chemical 'solutions' to social problems, encourages over-prescribing and multiple prescribing with the attendant risks of potentially dangerous drug combinations, and diverts finance from other areas of health care[19,20]. Massive advertising campaigns directed at doctors who insist that they know exactly what they are doing ('clinical freedom') despite evidence to the contrary set patterns of drug use in the population that are as much a reflection of the profit needs of a monopoly industry as they are of the medical needs of the ill. Postgraduate education of doctors, particularly general practitioners, is heavily dependent on the drug companies, through their visiting representatives, while their advertising revenue keeps medical journals going, and major subisidies given for conferences and meetings. This co-operation between the profession and one facet of monopoly capitalism, despite the evident disadvantages of it to the population and the health service, is a warning that a similar relationship — between doctors and large private medical corporations — would have a precedent.

CONSERVATIVE TACTICS AND STRATEGY

Thatcher's Cabinet does not have one single tactical line for shifting medical care back into the market. On the contrary, it has three tactics that may be pursued in isolation or independently, according to circumstances. The first tactic is to aim for minimal change by encouraging individual consultants to undertake private practice inside the NHS and letting the private insurance schemes look after themselves without too much assistance from the government. The second tactic leads to the creation of two health services, one public and one private, working in parallel and in conjunction and finding their own balance of influence and responsibility for provision of care. The third tactic aims for maximum change — replacement of the National Health Service with an insurance-based system like those operating in the USA or in parts of West Europe.

The tactic of minimum change has almost been achieved already, with the abolition of the Health Services Board that phased out pay beds under Labour, and the suggestion that a limited re-investment of paybeds was possible in certain areas[21]. Consultant contracts are being revised to permit all consultants in the NHS to undertake private practice, not just those consultants with part-time contracts as now. The general character of this Government's commitment to restructuring the whole of society and removing the features of socialism introduced by Labour governments suggest that they will want more than the first tactic can give. Nor will the medical insurance schemes happily abandon their chances of supported growth, as they made clear in talking of the need to 're-educate' Conservative politicians about private medicine in an internal discussion document leaked by the Communist Party in 1979.[22]

The tactic of maximum change

The tactic of maximum change is a big step, even for the radical Right, for it could antagonise many Conservative voters aware of the NHS's value and fearful of the financial implications of private care *imposed*

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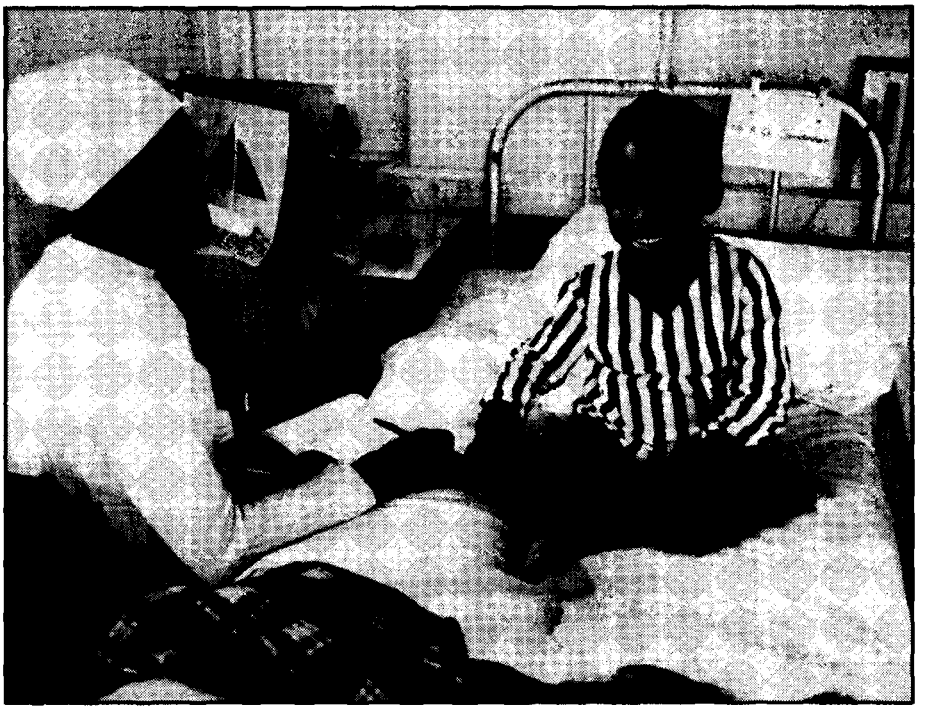

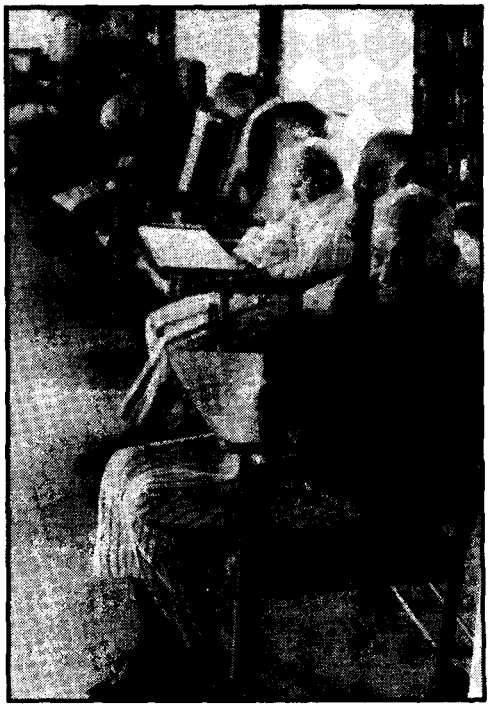

upon them rather than chosen. It would also embroil the Government in conflicts with the million strong workforce of the NHS whose jobs could be threatened by such an enormous change in health care, including the medical lobby that wants to keep private medicine under its control, inside the NHS. Finally, it would mean the creation of a service that would probably be more bureaucratic and more expensive (or rather, less cost effective) than the public service. Worse still, it would demand direct government subsidy, since a proportion of the population would not be able to afford medical insurance, either through poverty or through disability that was uninsurable. This group of people would need some kind of provision, however shoddy, and the cost of that would have to be borne primarily by the government (although charities could be recruited to obtain some of the revenue). The most important point about medical insurance systems is that they *must* exclude a proportion of the population; an insurance system that included everybody would just be a form of specially-earmarked tax on income, and new (and cumbersome) forms of taxation are not a part of the Government's plans[23,24]. To adopt an insurance system, therefore, would mean that the Conservatives were prepared for a short-term political conflict and in the long-term were prepared to accept the social and economic consequences of excluding a section of the population from health care. There is some evidence that the Cabinet is aware that such an approach would produce the kind of problems now experienced in the American health system. Nevertheless a feasibility study of insurance systems is under way in the DHSS.[25]

The tactic of choice

The tactic of parallel health services is the Government's tactic of choice. It runs contrary to Conservative thinking in some senses, for it implies a long-term subsidy from the public sector to the private sector (which can only provide a marginal service from its own resources, to the eternal shame of the advocates of private enterprise). Equally, Government boasts about direct, honest and fearless policies could not be applied to an approach that is piecemeal, pragmatic and sometimes covert. Such objections are unlikely to worry the Cabinet, however, when the prize is Labour's jewel.

The mechanics of this are three-fold. Firstly, the cuts in expenditure and the imposition of cash limits on health Authorities that were begun by Labour governments are being continued, and intensified, to force a 'rationalisation' of health services. As outlined above this will have consequences for the extent and quality of medical care that in turn will tip the balance in favour of private services, both from the point of view of the consumer and the service workers. Secondly, the structure of the NHS is being re-organised to push responsibility for provision of services away from central authorities (like the DHSS and planners and administrators at Regional and Area level) towards the 'grass roots'. Management methods are also being re-organised so that personal accountability of administrators can replace the collective responsibility of the present complex committee structure.

These structural reforms, presented in a consultation document called *Patients First*, will have dramatic effects on the NHS. The planned decentralisation of responsibility is dressed up as being democratic, yet is the opposite. The proposed new District Health Authorities will have fewer representatives from local government (or any other lay source), and fewer non-professional staff representatives than the present Area Health Authorities. They will probably have

[12] J Robson, 'NHS Inc?', *International Journal of Health Services*, 1974.
[13] Harvey Brenner, 'Mortality and the National Economy, *Lancet*, 1979, pp568-573.
[14] Len Fagin, 'The psychology of unemployment', *Medicine in Society*, Vol 3, No 1, 1978.
[15] G Brown and T Harris, *The Social Origins of Depression*, Tavistock, 1979.
[16] J Yudkin, *British Medical Journal*, Vol 2, p1212, 1978.
[17] BUPA estimates 8 million potential subscribers and actually has about 2 million.
[18] Witness the proposals to save the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital for Women through private involvement.
[19] *The Pharmaceutical Industry: a discussion document for the labour movement*, Labour Party, 1976.
[20] J Robson, *Take a Pill: the drug industry private or public*, Communist Party pamphlet, 1974.
[21] See footnote 2.
[22] 'Private medical insurance in a changing political environment', *Medicine in Society*, Vol 4, No 4, 1979.
[23] See footnote 7.
[24] P Torrins, *Lancet*, Jan 5th, 1980.
[25] *Hansard*, Jan 23rd, 1980.

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more medical representatives, however, reversing the trend towards displacement of medical influence that the 1974 re-organisation began. The new Authorities will be based upon existing hospitals (themselves distributed in an unplanned way) and community-based services will be organised around them, threatening the intended community orientation of health service growth that has been aimed for over the last decade. The very title *Patients First* expresses a vision of health care as dealing with *patients* almost exclusively, and not with people seeking to maintain health. This vision is essentially a doctor's vision of disease, and the idea of shifting influence further back towards the medical profession and concentrating it on hospitals confirms the one-sidedness of Conservative thinking about health care. Even the new management proposals contribute to this narrowing of NHS functions, for consensus management based on consultation with staff (however inadequate in method and uninspiring in practice) is more democratic than the command structure of the old Hospital Management Boards and Hospital Secretaries that the Conservatives seek to re-create under new names. Planning future development is going to become the responsibility of administrators primarily concerned with day-to-day organisation and increasingly influenced by the reinforced medical voices on the management committees.

The very title *Patients First* expresses a vision of health care as dealing with *patients* almost exclusively

The role of the medical profession in controlling health services will become increasingly important. This is the overall objective for the Government precisely because the medical profession has a complex and traditional relationship with private medicine in particular and monopoly capitalism in general. As a supplementary objective the Government is intervening in industrial relations with new provisions for dealing with disputes in the NHS. These provisions include organisation of voluntary labour and use of outside services (catering, laundry and laboratory facilities) if NHS services are disrupted by industrial action.[26]

Government steps

The Government's perspective for change was outlined in a letter from Health Minister Gerard Vaughan to the Secretary of the British Medical Association in July 1979. The letter described the co-operative growth of private and public hospital facilities at a local level, listing a number of practical steps that could be taken:

1 Advance notification of all significant private hospital development plans should be made to the relevant NHS Health Authority.

2 Local consultation between Health Authorities and private medical interests to ensure orderly and effective development of health services. Disagreements would be settled by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Services.

3 Increased use of contractual arrangements (working in both directions) for the joint provision of services, sharing of some staff, collaboration in research and in staff training.

The letter pointed out that most of these suggestions could be implemented without legislative provision, but that extra powers would be needed to permit private hospitals to provide services for the NHS and to take part in collaborative projects. Enabling legislation that would give such powers is currently under review in Parliamentary Committee — the Health Services Bill.

The end result of such changes will depend upon future expenditure on public health services. If the erosion of the NHS is halted and increased funding provided, a parallel structure of private services would lose its opportunities for growth and face genuine competition. On past evidence it would not be able to compete and would maintain its marginal position, but would achieve the minimum option described above. If, on the other hand, public expenditure on health is further reduced, and the demand for private medicine increases enough to warrant large-scale capital investment in new facilities, the private sector could grow in areas where substantial affluence persists despite the economic crisis. Under these circumstances the maximum option — largely insurance-based health care — may evolve in some parts of the country whilst public services predominate in others. At present the distribution of private medical practice is the same as the distribution of wealth, both socially and geographically, and we may see a phase in the development of health care when the South East has a different system of health service provision than, say, North East or North West England. The prospects of such growth clearly excite the medical insurance schemes. The Chief Executive of BUPA, Derek Dammerel, wrote an article in a medical newspaper in January 1979 that expressed this excitement directly:

The effect of reformism has been to deny that the NHS is an area of class conflict

> 'In the Republic of Ireland they have an NHS, but quite deliberately in recent years have encouraged the growth of voluntary health insurance. When I say encouraged they have given tax concessions, subsidise those who go into private or semi-private beds and indeed, encourage a private facility to be built alongside the state system and to share in the expensive equipment in every way possible.' — *Pulse*, January 27th, 1979, p17.

The prospect of parallel health services, then, is an attractive one for the vested interests concerned. In the short term it will subsidise the private sector. And in the long term, it could provide the springboard for replacement of the National Health Service by an insurance-based system.

THE LEFT AND THE POLITICS OF HEALTH

At first glance the Left and the labour movement generally have become increasingly concerned about political issues arising from health care over the last decade. The unionisation of health workers, the shift of professional organisations towards or even into the trade union movement, the disputes around pay beds, the resistance to the cuts, the development of a health students' movement, the appearance of agitational magazines and newspapers in hospitals and amongst unionists, the flurry of pamphlets and books, all of these suggest an intense interest and response to the politics of health. The impression is false, just as the measurement of an organisation's activity in terms of leaflets distributed or meetings held gives a false impression of its impact. If we look at the results of this activity the picture (apart from improvements in wages and salaries) is not impressive:

1 Trade union involvement in management of health services has developed up to a point, but persistent conflicts with professional organisations plus lack of trained cadres prevent full penetration of trade unionists into the administration of a public industry with more than a million employees.

2 Community-based organisations concerned with health issues have arisen from outside the labour movement more often than not. Trades councils with health subcommittees are the exception, not the rule, and the whole range of single-issue voluntary organisations like MIND (mental health), the Spastics Society, Age Concern and so on are outside the influence of the labour movement. Community Health

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Councils have shown themselves to be effective organisers of resistance to cuts as well as careful assessors of the standards of service in many areas, but trade union input into them is patchy and the only political party that has shown serious interest in them is the Conservative Party — which wants them abolished. The happy exception to this pattern is the relationship between the labour movement and the campaigns to defend the 1967 Abortion Law.

3 The level of analysis of specific problems — like what to do with the pharmaceutical companies — is low, with Labour Party policy being caught (still) in mixed-economy ideas and partial reforms of price structure and advertising restrictions. Issues of management, administration and planning are outside the Left's sphere of politics, and there is a general feeling (most marked on the far left) that issues like private practice and prescription charges are worth more attention than the more protracted struggle within the institutions of health care.

As a consequence the labour movement does not have a perspective for the development of health care, even though individuals within the movement do (or think they do). The slogan 'Defend and extend the NHS' fails because neither adequate defence nor practical extension are possible for a movement that has left all such complexities to 'experts' without watching carefully what they do, and interfering in their activity when necessary.

Two key problems

If the labour movement is to stop the Conservatives achieving their goal of restructuring the NHS, two problems have to be dealt with. The first entails bringing the politics of health into the mainstream of labour movement activity, by using organisations like the Socialist Medical Association and the Medical Practitioners Union more as autonomous campaigning bodies and less as specialist adjuncts to the broader movement. The second requires the right issues to be selected and campaigned around, through appropriate forms of organisation. Both problems will be difficult to solve, given that in the post-war retreat of socialist ideas and organisations, the labour movement surrendered its weakest areas first. Health care was, and still is, one of those weak areas. Paradoxically the most significant creation of post-war social democracy is also its area of greatest ideological and organisational weakness. The effect of reformism has been to deny that the NHS is an area of class conflict, choosing instead to pose efficient administration against professional influence. The political significance of the medical profession, the nature of its 'professionalism', and the need to organise politically within it, have all been underestimated and neglected. Concern over policy issues has been presented as a special matter and taken out of the normal range of labour movement consideration. The political dominance of the right in the Labour Party has inflicted this on the movement as a whole, and a Communist Party pushed to the margins of politics has had little choice but to accept this.

The first problem is potentially soluble. Renewal of the Socialist Medical Association, reorganisation of its branches and a return to active campaigning within the labour movement, are all occurring. Whether the SMA can ultimately co-ordinate NHS trade unionists, CLPs, Community Health Councils, trades councils and socialist and radical professionals remains to be seen. But given careful attention by the Left there is no reason why it should not do so.

Taking the politics of the labour movement into the medical profession's structure is a more difficult problem. The Medical Practitioners Union is the only vehicle available to the movement, but receives insufficient priority within trade unionism and is short of resources. Given adequate support it could take a spectrum of labour movement policies into the organisations of the medical profession and engage the Right on its own ground. To do that the MPU has to be freed from a form of left sectarianism that is prevalent within the labour movement. The assessment of doctors as a group being 'the class enemy' means that organisations like the MPU are seen as havens for 'class traitors' from medicine who can be drawn towards the labour movement. There is no conception of mass organisations that could drive a wedge into the medical profession. Combating this approach requires conscious effort in trade unions and political parties from the top levels of leadership down to cadre level — the kind of effort where Communist Party initiatives may be decisive.

Priority issues

The problem of selecting priority issues in health care and campaigning around them is a lesser one for the labour movement. The wide range of single-issue and broad initiatives by small, local organisations gives scope for labour movement action, even though most of these campaigns have arisen outside the traditional working-class organisations. The prospect of winning new services or improving existing ones suggests that campaigns around community-based and preventative medical services should be pursued: in defence of existing child care clinics and screening programmes, and for their extension to areas lacking them; to establish well-woman clinics and day-care abortion units; and for experimental salaried general practitioner services in the cities. The pressure in favour of private medical insurance is so great that a labour movement campaign against insurance schemes is imperative. In the first instance such a campaign must be aimed at the most vulnerable sections of the working population, to whom insurance schemes may appear attractive. In the longer term, the attack on private medicine needs projecting into the NHS structure (to minimise or undermine local relationships with private medicine) and the medical profession

could a socialist renewal, even if a decade or more distant, spring from the campaigns to preserve the National Health Service?

(to neutralise the Tory's major ally, if at all possible). Finally, the extension of trade union and community opinion into NHS administration at all levels is a high priority. Correction of the imbalance between professional interests on the one hand and non-professional and lay views on the other could tip the balance of power at local level, in favour of rational planning to meet local needs. Co-ordinated intervention in the day-to-day activity of the NHS by progressive professionals, trade unionists and community organisations could have an increasing impact on Health Authority functioning. Such intervention is feasible now in some areas where the component forces already exist (if only in embryo) in anti-cut campaigns and health-service sub-committees of trades councils, and could be extended to other, mainly industrial, areas where organisation has a strong basis.

If this counter-attack can be launched, it could halt Conservative plans to dismantle the NHS, if only by drawing-out the political conflicts that the Government already fears could be unduly prolonged. Could a stalemate over health service reform throw wider policy issues into question, and blunt the Tory ideological offensive? And could a socialist renewal, even if a decade or more distant, spring from the campaigns to preserve the National Health Service? How ironic it would be if the Left found the spearhead of anti-Conservatism through the hesitations and reservations of an otherwise strident Government, and not through its own 'scientific' analyses! □

[26] DHSS circular, Dec 1979.

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Tito

by Sam Russell

The partisans: the break with Stalin: unifying a country . . . his achievements were manifold

Communist revolutionary worker, soldier and statesman, Yugoslav patriot and indefatigable internationalist, Josip Broz Tito will go down in history as the Communist leader who withstood Stalin's threats and survived to tell the tale.

It was he who established the right of Yugoslavia's Communists to work out their own way to Socialism and to implement it without interference, at a time when the Soviet model was being applied without question elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

How significant that stand was, not only for Yugoslav Communists but for the entire international communist movement, has become increasingly clear over the past 30 years. It is difficult to appreciate today the extent of the savage propaganda campaign launched by all Communist Parties at the time, following the Soviet lead, against the Yugoslav Communist Party and particularly against Tito personally, who was labelled as a 'Trotskyist', 'fascist' and 'agent of US imperialism'.

But this was not only a war of words, for at the same time a vicious economic blockade was imposed on Yugoslavia by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and the attempt to starve the people of Yugoslavia into submission had to be met by measures which shaped the country's future development and continue to do so today.

If today, most Communist Parties have recognised the justice and revolutionary rectitude of the Yugoslav stand, this has not been because of Tito's blue eyes but because life itself has shown that there can be no other way forward for the communist movement.

In the socialist development of Yugoslavia in the 35 years since its partisan army under Communist leadership liberated the country from nazi fascism, Tito and the party initiated many aspects of creative Marxism, most notably in the introduction of workers' self management internally and in the foundation of the non-aligned movement in international relations. But none of this would have been possible without the prior establishment of the principle of the independence of Communist Parties, of their right to determine their own roads to socialism and to have that right respected by other parties however powerful, as well as the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of brother parties.

While such principles appear so self-evident today as to be almost a truism and are religiously recorded in almost every communique issued after meetings of Communist Parties, they were far from self-evident in 1948. And if they are accepted today it is in large measure due to the single-handed struggle waged by Tito backed by the Yugoslav Communist Party and people against what seemed at the time impossible odds.

The background

To understand how this came about one has to go back into the early history of the Yugoslav Communist Party and the relations of its leadership with the Communist International. After 1930 a large part of that leadership was living in Moscow and subsequently suffered horribly from Stalin's purges when several hundred Yugoslav Communists were 'liquidated' which means murdered, although posthumously 'rehabilitated' in 1957 after the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

Recalling those events at the ninth congress of the Yugoslav League of Communists in 1969, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the foundation the party, Tito said: 'Their tragedy was all the greater for having been tortured under the false accusation that they were spies and traitors, for having been sent to their death, monstrously accused of crimes they never committed.'

Under Tito's leadership the Yugoslav party's central committee adopted an increasingly independent stand in regard to various political developments, including the signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact in August 1939.

Explaining his views on relations with the Soviet Union, Tito said in 1969: 'Naturally, after the victory of the October Socialist Revolution, all genuine revolutionary movements, including ours, considered it

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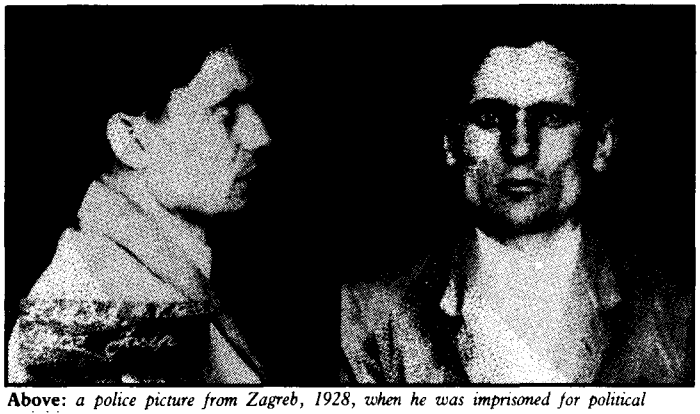

Above: *a police picture from Zagreb, 1928, when he was imprisoned for political activities.*
Right: *Josip Broz (arrowed) as an apprentice mechanic in Slovenia, 1912.*
Below: *at the Non-aligned Countries Summit in Havana last year.*

their international obligation to extend unconditional support to the Soviet Union, the first land of socialism. However, the policy of subordination to the temporary state interests and tactics of Soviet foreign policy did tremendous damage to various Communist Parties even before the war and later, as well as after it.'

The Resistance

The role of the Yugoslav Communists and of Tito personally in the leadership of the armed uprising which held down 40 German nazi divisions during the war, thus creating a new front where the German high command expected a walkover, is well known. It was on April 15, 1941 that the CPY issued a declaration in which it announced that an armed struggle would be waged against the fascist invaders and that from this struggle a new world would be born. On July 4 came the historic decision to launch the armed liberation struggle and in that first year about 80,000 Yugoslav fighting men pinned down over 500,000 enemy troops and liberated over 40 towns.

While Tito has always stressed the role of the Soviet army which he said 'bore the brunt of the struggle', he has also stated that particularly during the war the CPY 'objected to subordinating its policy to the interests of Stalin's global strategy'. It did not accept the thesis of the 'two stages of the revolution', with the second stage to be left until after victory over fascism. As Tito said, it 'boldly paved the way for the victorious socialist revolution in the national liberation war, in accordance with our conditions and the aspirations of our working class and people.'

From the very beginning of the armed uprising in 1941, until final victory, Yugoslavia's national liberation movement was exceptionally well organised under the leadership of the Communist Party and working class, and was imbued with a revolutionary character.

This armed struggle was so effective that the Italian invaders who had 20 divisions in Yugoslavia, were never able to release a single division from the Yugoslav theatre for the eastern front, while the German commanders also stressed that the front in Yugoslavia was 'equal in importance' to the other fronts where the axis powers were engaged.

Major military and political victories were also achieved in 1942 which saw the holding of the first session of the Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia and the formation of a nation-wide political representative body. By this time too, a national liberation army of 150,000 had been created divided into corps, divisions, brigades and partisan detachments which liberated an area of 50,000 square kilometres, forcing the invaders to commit 30 divisions to the country, while the Italians were forced to keep more troops there than on the African front.

In the first half of 1943, when the Germans and Italians had more troops in Yugoslavia than at the battle of Alamein, they failed to destroy the main liberation forces at the famous battles of Neretva and

> It is difficult to appreciate today the extent of the savage propaganda campaign launched by all Communist Parties at the time

Sutjeska when the enemy had forces six times superior to the liberation army. Even the nazi General Lutters had to admit: 'The course of the fighting has shown that the forces under Tito's command are excellently organised, skilfully led and possess an astonishing fighting morale . . . The Communists are an opponent to be taken seriously.'

A remarkable achievement

When Italy capitulated, the liberation army disarmed ten Italian divisions, capturing large quantities of arms and equipment. By the end of October 1943 the liberation army numbered 300,000 fighting

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thus creating a new front where the German High Command expected a walkover

men and although, up until then it had not received any material assistance from anyone, it continued to contribute powerfully to the allied cause and to the development of the liberation movement in Albania and Greece and to the resistance movement in Italy.

By the middle of 1944 a large part of Yugoslavia had been liberated and in September when most of Serbia had been liberated, the German commander Field Marshal von Weichs reported: 'These are operationally and tactically well-led forces who are enviably equipped with heavy armament, who possess a dynamism that must not be under-rated and whose number is growing steadily.'

It was then that Tito went to Moscow where agreement was reached for the Soviet army to pass through part of Yugoslavia on its way to Hungary and for the co-ordination of operations between the Soviet army and Yugoslavia's liberation army.

In the spring of 1945, four of Tito's armies undertook a final offensive, liberating the western part of the country and dealt the enemy such a blow that the Germans alone lost 98,000 dead, while 285,000 Germans, quislings and other collaborators were captured. Total losses of the liberation army during the war amounted to 305,000 dead and 425,000 wounded, while the enemy dead totalled 450,000. Yugoslavia's total losses amounted to 1,700,000 and there can be no doubt about the decisive contribution they made to the historic victory over fascism.

One of the most difficult problems that the CPY had to contend with in the final stages of the war was the question of the international recognition of the new Yugoslavia and its future, 'especially,' as Tito reported, 'in view of the agreement between Churchill and Stalin on setting up spheres of influence in Yugoslavia.' In the event, however, the spheres of influence plan suffered a complete fiasco as did Stalin's attempt to establish control over Yugoslavia.

This was the situation when the infamous Cominform resolution attacking the Yugoslav Communists was issued. It has to be noted that while the Comintern was wound up in 1943, soon after the war, on Stalin's initiative, a small number of European Communist Parties set up the so-called 'Communist Information Bureau' which became called the Cominform. Although the British Communist Party was not part of this select group, it was fully mobilised to back the anti-Tito campaign which went on for several years.

Even after Stalin died in 1953 it took two years before the Soviet Communist Party sent a delegation to Belgrade in 1955 composed of its first secretary N S Khrushchov and Premier Nikolay Bulganin to apologise and Mr K to declare: 'We have thoroughly investigated the materials upon which the grave accusations against and insults to the leaders of Yugoslavia were based at the time. Facts indicate that those materials were fabricated by the enemies of the people, the contemptible agents of imperialism who had fraudulently wormed their way into the ranks of our party.'

The meaning of the conflict

Tito saw Stalin's attack as 'the first open conflict between the bureaucratic concept of a socialist state and the roads of socialist development in the world, evolved in the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership (which cannot be treated at all as merely some sort of 'personality cult'), and the anti-dogmatic approach, the democratic, humane concept of socialist society which found expression even earlier and especially after the war, in the activity of the CPY.'

forced the country's Communist leadership to go cap in hand to the hostile western powers

The repercussions of that confrontation are still with us today despite the attempts of certain people to brush it under the carpet, nor can the Soviet action in crushing the attempt of the Czechoslovak Communist Party under the leadership of Alexander Dubcek to establish 'Socialism with a human face' in its country, prevent the basic issues which arose out of the 1948 events from facing Communist Parties in and out of power today too.

That confrontation raised basic questions concerning the theory and practice of socialism, the question of state ownership and ownership under socialism in general, the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transitional period, the process of the withering away of the state, socialist relations, relations between socialist states and Communist Parties, international relations and the forms of struggle to ensure peace, as well as many other questions.

Since 1948 it has been demonstrated time and again and notably in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Poland in 1970 that the problems that faced Yugoslavia then in the development of socialism, face many other parties and socialist countries. Of course the conclusions of the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956 that each country had to find its own road to socialism and that there could be various forms of building socialism, were a positive development.

But before that happened, the series of phoney trials in the early 1950s in Eastern Europe, which resulted in the execution of many leading Communists including Lazslo Rajk in Hungary, Traicho Kostov in Bulgaria and Rudolf Slansky in Czechoslovakia to name but a few, showed what would have happened to the Yugoslav Communists if Tito had not replied with a resounding 'no' to Stalin's attempts to subjugate that party and people.

It was in the situation created by Stalin's economic blockade of Yugoslavia which forced the country's Communist leadership to go cap in hand to the hostile western powers for aid and loans which eventually were doled out at extortionate rates of interest, that that leadership had to decide the way forward for a backward Balkan country.

Workers' self-management

The historic answer of Yugoslavia's Communists at that time was to put forward the slogan 'Factories to the workers' and to take the first steps in establishing the system of socialist self-management when Tito placed before the People's Assembly on June 28, 1950 the draft of the basic law on the transfer of the management of state economic enterprises and major economic organisations to working collectives. He argued: 'Some may consider this law premature, thinking that the workers will not be able to master the complicated technique of management of factories and other enterprises. Whoever thinks so is mistaken and such an attitude would mean distrusting our workers, the inability to see what enormous creative power our workers will develop precisely through this management . . . There were people who thought and still think that the management of the means of production can be solved by placing the best workers as managers or directors. That was, however, only the most urgent measure after the state had taken over the means of production.'

Confronting the Assembly clearly with the difficulties that stood in the way of building Socialism in such a backward country, Tito asked: 'But what shall we do? Shall we wait for all workers to become equally educated and able to manage the enterprises? Of course not, it is precisely through the process of management that all workers will

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With Krushchev and Bulganin, 1955.

1972, in Yugoslavia.

acquire the necessary experience and get acquainted not only with the process of work but also with all the problems of their enterprise . . . From now in state ownership of the means of production, factories, mines, railways will be gradually evolving into a higher form of socialist ownership. State ownership is the lowest form of social ownership and not the highest as the leaders of the USSR would have it.'

A bold and some may have thought a foolhardy challenge 30 years later, Tito said: 'As we look back over the road we have covered we can state that we have not always found a true measure in trying to reduce the state's economic functions to an indispensable minimum. There were several reasons for this. Even in the League of Communists we have not always been unanimous as regards the role of the state in the economy. The centralisation of state functions had been very extensive, particularly of the resources for financing expanded reproduction in the federation, which did not allow the republics and provinces to bear a direct responsibility for their own as well as for the common development. This was mainly due to the fact that the centre did not always pay sufficient attention to the economic equality of the republics and provinces, to the specific circumstances in them and to their different interests.'

Admitting that 'we have suffered from setbacks in developing our system of self-management since 1950', Tito said that it 'is more and more asserting itself as an economic system' and cited the country's rates of economic development with a 6.2% average annual growth rate between 1947 and 1978 and with industry increasing by 9% a year over the same period. This means that industrial production is 15 times higher than in 1947, while personal consumption has quadrupled in the last 25 years.

As the new production relations developed so there was a continuous process of changes in the political system, with decision-making in public services, hitherto within the competence of the state administration, being taken over increasingly by working people and citizens.

How far the system of workers' self-management and the promulgation of the Law on Associated Labour has truly made the working class the effective ruling economic and political force in Yugoslav society is still a subject of discussion. Certainly at one stage in the development, Tito himself drew attention to the danger of the technocrats taking over and the delegate principle of decision-making at all levels was supposed to deal with that danger. How far it has done so is still a moot point. Certainly the administrative, centralised system of running the economy, which had been indispensable immediately after the war, soon showed its shortcomings and

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weaknesses and had to be changed.

'There were some individuals and small groups,' Tito recalled on one occasion, 'who thought that the process of decentralisation and democratisation, a market economy, creation of a number of centres of social power and decision-making at all levels, was the road to anarchy and chaos.'

The Yugoslav economy

How basically healthy the Yugoslav economy is today, is shown by the latest OECD report (8/6/80) which reported: 'Despite the marked slowdown in the average growth of GDP in the OECD area and of world trade since 1974, the Yugoslav economy has maintained almost the same high rate of growth as before the 1973 oil crisis (more than 6% per annum) with a particularly rapid expansion of investment. The growth target for 1980 has been set at 5%, a rate distinctly below the performance of recent years, but still quite appreciable in the context of slower expansion in the Eastern European countries, which absorb 40% of Yugoslav commodity exports, and in the OECD area.'

> 'it is precisely through the process of management that all workers will acquire the necessary experience'

'The continued application of development-oriented policies,' the OECD report continues, 'has raised average living standards (although considerable differences persist between regions) and brought about important socio-economic transformations. Agricultural employment is about one-third of the total compared with more than two-thirds in the early post-war period. The volume and range of industrial production have increased very substantially. Education, health and social services have been expanded significantly. And with higher personal living standards, new types of labour-intensive service activities have acquired macro-economic importance in recent years.'

Employment trends improved considerably in the 1970s compared with the 1960s and although unemployment has been continually rising since the early 1950s, in 1979 registered job seekers increased by less than 4%, which was the lowest rate of increase since 1972. Out of 765,000 job seekers in 1979 about one-third were already employed but registered in order to change jobs. The number of Yugoslavs working abroad has declined from the peak of 1,100,000 in 1973 to less than 800,000 today.

'Despite the temporary difficulties and particular problems that have emerged,' said the OECD report, 'the medium-term overall performance of the Yugoslav economy has been in many ways remarkable.' And it is doubtful, to say the least, whether continuation of the Soviet-style economy would have produced similar results, while in any case the Soviet-imposed economic blockade in 1948 left no alternative but to seek another way.

Non-alignment

Socialist self-management in internal affairs is regarded by Yugoslavia's leaders as part and parcel of the policy of non-alignment in international affairs and a reflection on the world scene of the relations that exist between the six equal nations that make up the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its 22 million people.

The idea of non-alignment was originally looked on with suspicion by the members and allies of the two military blocs, NATO and the Warsaw Pact. At his first meeting with India's Premier Jawarhalal Nehru in 1954, Tito said 'We do not wish to establish a third bloc, but rather to increase the number of states which put the preservation of peace and active co-existence above all', and these ideas were embodied in their joint statement which made it clear that they rejected neutrality.

Tito later met Egypt's President Nasser and out of that arose the meeting in autumn 1960 of five great statesmen from three continents, Tito, Nehru and Nasser, together with Indonesia's President Sukarno and Ghana's President Nkrumah, who met during the 15th session of the UN Assembly in New York at the Yugoslav embassy.

The first non-aligned conference met in Belgrade in 1961 with 25 nations attending. There were 45 in Cairo in 1964, 54 in Lusaka in 1970, 75 in Algiers in 1972, 86 in Colombo in 1976 and 96 in Havana in 1979, testifying to the growing strength and influence of the non-alignment idea, now the voice of two-thirds of humankind. It is also a voice that has to be reckoned with by the great powers.

'The true revolutionary tenor of the non-aligned policy,' Tito explained on one occasion, 'is to oppose all kinds of political and economic domination, to fight all, not just old but also new forms of subordination in relations among states and nations. The interests of non-alignment cannot be identified with any narrow interests, certainly not with bloc interests. The non-aligned countries are against any such identification and they resist all attempts at being in one way or another aligned with the blocs.'

Although this definition seemed to be coming apart at the edges at the last conference in Havana, the presence of Tito and his active intervention prevented any attempt to disrupt the non-aligned idea and all participants paid a special tribute to Tito's work for the movement and his work in resisting the increasing pressures to which the non-aligned movement is being subjected.

Tito's approach

Tito was already 45 when, in 1937, after spending 27 years in the struggle of the workers' revolutionary movement, he took on the most responsible duties of his life as leader of the Yugoslav Communist Party in the critical days before World War II. Throughout his life as a revolutionary, this outstanding Communist and warm human being championed the right of other peoples to be free as he had fought for the freedom of the peoples of Yugoslavia.

Up to his last moments, when faced with the deteriorating international situation he called attention to the need to halt the slide to increasing tension. This was on a par with his determination to defend the development of relations of equality in the international working class movement.

> 'to fight all, not just old but also new forms of subordination in relations among states'

'We the Communists of Yugoslavia,' Tito said on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the party in 1969, 'do not think that we have found the answers to all contemporary dilemmas of socialism and we are aware of the problems, difficulties and shortcomings in the implementation of our own policy.

'Let the results achieved in the development of new social relationships, the degree of humanisation and the freedom of our society, the attainments in improving the living conditions of the working people and satisfying their material and spiritual needs, be the yardstick of the correctness and success of our policies and practices.

'Let the basic yardstick of true internationalism and the revolutionary character of our League, as of every other revolutionary workers' party, be its creative contribution to international practice and socialist thought, to the real struggle against imperialism and for the peace and independence of peoples, for the genuine emancipation of labour.' □

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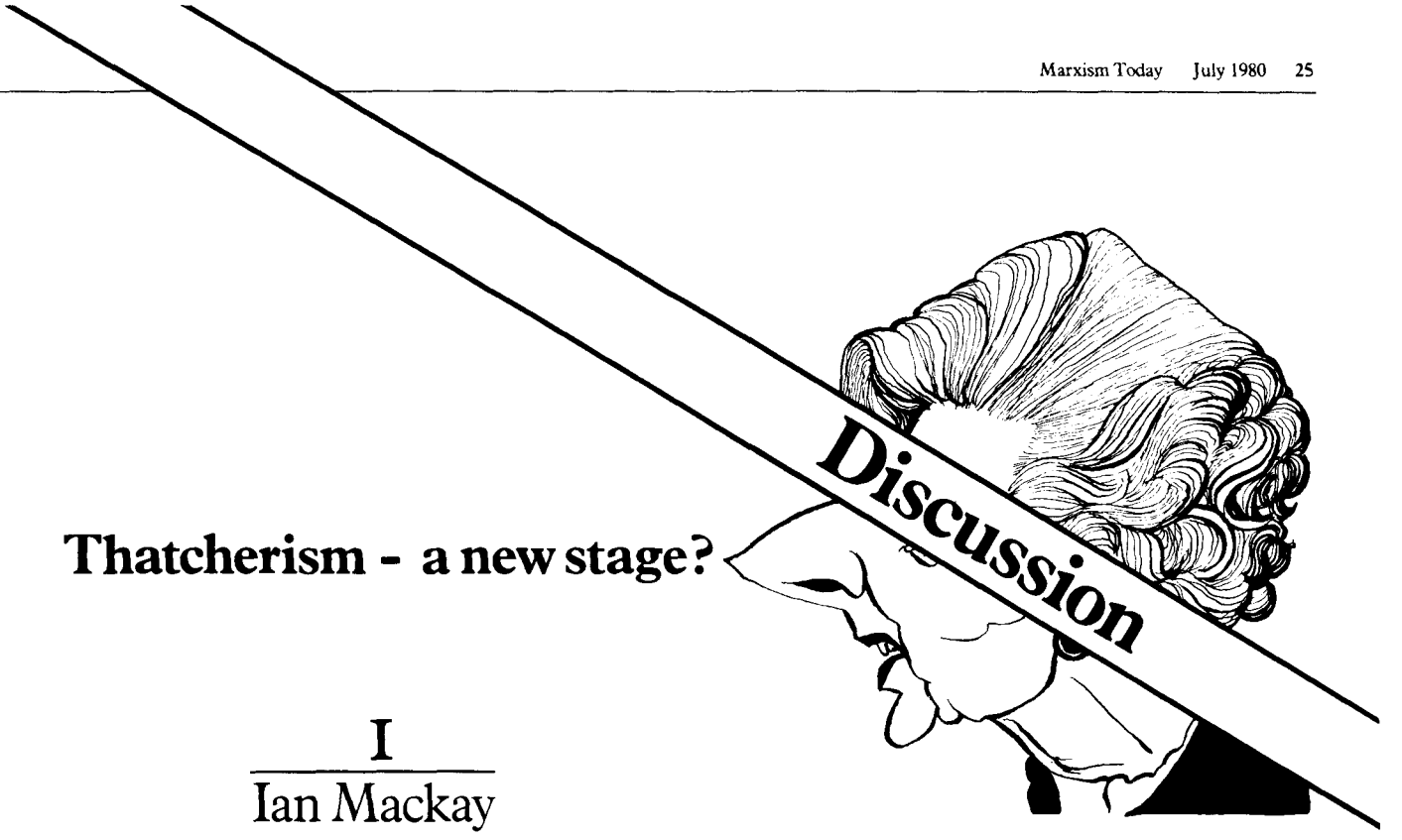

Thatcherism - a new stage?

I

Ian Mackay

> 'The last election meant more than a change of party, more than a switch of political emphasis. It marks a fundamental change in the country's approach to its problems, a new perspective.
>
> More owner-occupiers, fewer council tenants, a common sense view of what the Government should do, and what the people can do best for themselves.'

Mrs Thatcher speaking at the Tory Women's Conference in May).

Thatcher, it's clear, would quite willingly accept the epithet of an 'ism' after her name, and as we have witnessed, claims her policies and philosophy as a 'radical' new approach. Marxists however, I think, should be wary about how far we go along this road in our analysis of the Thatcher government, and in our attempt, correctly, to alert the movement to what is new in the Thatcher approach. We need careful examination of how, and for what reasons, they represent a departure from previous post-war Tory governments, and the dangers in this for the British people and labour movement. The present discussion in *Marxism Today* is making a valuable contribution to this.

The political resolution adopted by the last Congress of the Communist Party characterised the outcome of the last general election and the aims of the new Tory Government as 'a new and dangerous shift to the right in British politics, and a severe setback for the labour movement'. Some contributions to this discussion go further than this and consider that the Tory victory represented a fundamental change in British politics. I think, however, that this is a much too hasty conclusion. Whether it will or not become as fundamental has still to be decided, and this will only be resolved in the course of the class struggle over the next year or so. The battle is well 'joined' already, and alongside our necessary and continuing analyses must go our input into that struggle to help determine the outcome.

In one of the contributions to this discussion the point was made that the Tories under Thatcher are the only parliamentary force who take the position that 'Things cannot go on in the old way', ie, post-war Britain. (That the Tories want to force us back to the last century is beside the point.)

This is certainly true with regards the Liberals. No matter Steele's efforts to find a new 'centre' position in British politics, they remain, at this stage at least, very much an anachronism. What is of greater concern is that it is also true of the position of Callaghan/Healey and right-wing Labour.

With the experience of the Wilson/Callaghan government still fresh in the minds of millions, it's clear that the success and strength of the Thatcher 'populist' approach to some considerable extent lies in the weakness and failure of the last right-wing Labour government. Thatcher's appeal, in other words, was able to penetrate the thinking of substantial sections of the working class, not only as a result of ruling class propaganda, but also via the reformist ideas of right-wing Labour and, where not from these ideas, from the lack of them — 'the theory of no theory'.

As Gordon McLennan said in his opening report to the last Communist Party Congress, 'The major responsibility for Labour's defeat in the last general election rests on right-wing Labour policy and leadership, especially in the class collaboration policies of the Social Contract'.

Fluidity

Far from there being evidence of fundamental change which must mean of a lasting character, after a year of Tory rule, it's already becoming evident that the political situation in Britain remains as fluid as in the pre-Thatcher period. In their support for the Thatcher solution to Britain's crisis, monopoly capitalism is engaged in an enormous gamble which, far from creating a new perspective for the ruling class to continue its rule, could, and I think is, opening up further possibilities for left development in British politics of quite historic dimensions. This has been made all the more possible because certain lasting gains were made by the Left as a result of the campaign against the Social Contract policy for class collaboration. In that protracted battle great changes were brought about which have made the trade union leadership in particular more capable of conducting the political battle within the labour movement as a whole. Only clear recognition of this can explain the extraordinary importance of the fight that made the TUC's Day of Action on 14th May such a success. This could not have come about just as a reaction to the Tory policies. The basis for the political advance in the movement demonstrated by 14th May had been built up initially by the Communist Party's stand in the preceding years.

In any analysis of the political situation in Britain, it's always worthwhile reminding ourselves of the undemocratic character of the electoral system and that the present Government is a minority government

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without the majority mandate of the British people, which the Tories misrepresent and try to make so much of. Ironically, the one majority mandate given by the electors in recent British political history was that given by the Scottish people last year in their vote of 51.3% for a devolved Assembly. Readers, however, will remember that that vote was declared to be 'insufficient' on such 'an important issue'. It is, I think, worth making the point in passing that in any analysis of the Thatcher victory of May 1979, the exceptional position in Scotland should be taken into account.

It should also be recognised that this is attributable in large measure to the role of the Communist Party and the Left in the first instance, through which the labour movement was won to identify with and lead the fight for the national and democratic aspirations of the Scottish people.

Not only is the Tory government a minority government, but, as has been pointed out in this discussion, its share of the vote in the last general election was smaller than in 1970, and much smaller than in the period 1951-1959.

A further indication of the fluidity of the present political situation was the outcome of the district elelctions on 1st May, the first major test of public opinion since the last general election.

In this election, the Tories suffered big losses and Labour's gains went further than just winning back the lost ground of the previous district elections. This does not mean that any credence should be given to ideas of complacency and the theory that 'given time, the Tories will defeat themselves', but neither should we be taken in by the predictable Tory response to the results, that 'it could have been much worse'.

These election results, alongside the rising tide of struggle against Tory policies, are heartening and positive features in the political situation. The effects on the people in real life of the present Tory policies is bringing more and more into the struggle against such policies, and this must include many who voted for them. Thatcher's determination to stick to the present course no matter the consequences, is only having the effect of creating the basis for a mass movement against the Tories, not through spontaneity, but by the step by step development of the struggle.

May 14

Stuart Hall, in his contribution to this discussion, emphasised the need for a counter-hegemonic strategy to match and counter the Tories.

This is a concept, I would presume, that embodies the need to win mass support for the Left's alternative strategy. In order to achieve this, most are agreed that such policies need to be made more real and more readily understood among the masses of people, if they are to win greater support and their relevance become clearer to millions. In this the trade union movement has a crucial role to play, not, I agree, as a substitute for the development of left political organisation and action, but because the trade union movement is fundamental to the defence of the interests of the working class and to economic and social advance, and in the fight for socialism in Britain. In the period preceding 14th May, the Tories, backed by the mass media, railled at the trade unions and trade unionists to 'stay out of politics', and condemned the Day of Action on 14th May as a political strike. There is of course nothing they fear more than the trade union movement of this country fulfilling its role of uniting the working class for left objectives. In different times, when the TUC was carrying through its leading role for right objectives, it was considered 'statesmanlike', now, today, it is 'irresponsible', 'out of touch with its members', etc.

This Tory and mass media attack on the trade unions, personally on Len Murray for carrying out his mandate, and the TUC itself, is consistent with their offensive against the trade unions since coming to office. They are, at the moment, pushing through Parliament their so-called Employment Bill to back their offensive by the use of the courts.

But with regard to 14th May, the attack on the unions reached unprecedented heights. Why?

Because here were the trade unions 'interfering with the democratic process', 'getting involved in politics', 'leading a political strike against the democratically elected government'.

The significance of the Day of Action was not lost on Callaghan, Healey and Co, who are aware that what the unions were fighting for against the Tory government could equally be used against a future Labour government that refused to carry out the policies of the movement. Little wonder Healey said he 'could not see the appropriateness of such action,' or that 'such actions would serve any useful purpose'. The truth is that mass action/class struggle is anathema to right-wing Labour. They basically preach the same concept of democracy as the Tories.

May 14th was important not only because it involved an estimated 2 million workers in strike action and brought hundreds of thousands of workers onto the streets in demonstrations, but, as I've already made clear, because of the character of the action itself.

Millions of workers throughout the country were involved in meetings and discussions on 'their future', on the 'country's future', in a way we have not witnessed before. What was being discussed was the alternative to the Tories and their policies, not only the need for the defeat of the Tory government, but the need to replace them with a Labour government that will carry through the policies of the labour and trade union movement. The fight for the left alternative strategy in real life.

The challenge facing the Left now is to win a further development of what was represented by 14th May. Given that, a radical change can be brought about in the political situation in the interests of the Left.

The labour movement then is 'renewing itself as a political force', and is being 'revitalised'. This has been going on for some years now, as a result of advances made within it by the Left, and must be given further impetus by the development of the struggle against the Tories and Labour right-wing.

As the consequences of the Tory economic strategy make themselves more and more evident, the struggle will intensify and the ideological battle will sharpen considerably. The development of the process referred to above must be pressed forward with great urgency.

Labour Party Special Conference

I think it then of considerable importance that the NEC of the Labour Party is aware of the urgency of the present situation, and this is reflected in its decision to call a special conference, held on 31st May. The draft declaration *Peace, Jobs and Freedom*, endorsed emphatically by the conference, reflects the left advance that has taken place in the policy of the party over the last period.

The declaration adopted on 31st May is very positive in its sharp anti-Tory position, condemning Tory policies both in home and foreign affairs. The section on peace, especially in view of the present tense international situation, is extremely positive, recognising the increasing danger of world nuclear war, and stressing Britain's role in taking real steps for peace and detente.

The proposal to cut arms spending only to the level of 'our European allies', while releasing a substantial amount of money, leaves the level of arms spending at far too high a level, and the formulation itself perpetuates policy for Britain's continuing role in NATO.

Nonetheless, the great stress placed on the peace issue in the conference itself, and the decisions of the party to hold a national

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demonstration on 22nd June, are additional indications of the advance of this vital issue that has been achieved.

Important also is the condemnation in the declaration of EEC policies and the understanding that if these are not reversed, the whole question of Britain's membership will need to be reviewed. Similarly, the commitment of the next Labour government to end mass unemployment; increase public ownership and public spending; repeal the Tory Employment Bill and strengthen democratic control in many areas of social and economic life.

While there are a number of weaknesses in the document, for example no clear pledge on import controls, and no mention of the Tory racist measures or the major democratic issue of devolved Assemblies for Scotland and Wales, by far the most crucial area of weakness is on incomes policy and the disastrous consequences of such a policy pursued by the last Labour government.

Fundamental to the success of the left's alternative economic strategy — winning an understanding among the working class for this strategy — and dispelling the cynicism and disillusionment that arose from the failure of the last Labour government — is the crucial need for the whole movement to commit any future Labour government to reject incomes policy and pursue a policy of increasing the purchasing power of the people through higher wages as the key to the expansion of the economy.

The right-wing will fight tooth and nail on this issue (note Callaghan's speech at the special conference) and use it as a lever to divide the movement, and try to consolidate the dominance of their own position and hit back at the Left's advance on policy and on party democracy.

The political developments in the movement over the last year make it clear that the aims of the right-wing can be defeated, but only through the further development of the mass movement against the Tories and the widest unity of all left and progressive forces at the heart of which must lie Labour/Communist unity.

This unity is growing, and will continue to grow in all the mass struggle ahead. It's expressed at this stage by those most active in the trade union and democratic organisations, rather than between organisations of the two parties. This will be increasingly necessary if the mass struggle is to gain greater power and perspective and take the next major stride along the road to socialism in Britain.

Thatcherism - a new stage?

2

Sue Slipman

Many of the contributors have agreed that 'Thatcherism' has, 'fundamentally changed the political rules of the game', and that there will be no simple return to the stalemate of the Labour government. So far there has been little examination of the contribution made by the Left in creating the political climate for the rise of Thatcherism. Yet, it was our policies on battles over the social contract which eventually broke the stalemate, and, in particular, the priority given to wages battles. At its end the social contract had become a passive consensus in which people were asked to hold back. The wages offensive gave expression to the frustration felt with this static condition. The political solutions people chose, however, represented a different kind of 'freedom' from the one we proposed. Thatcher offered individual freedom. In destroying the social contract we helped give credence to the idea that individual freedom comes from the wage packet. In doing this we helped to undermine people's perception of the value of the public services as part of a social wage.

The Tories effectively won the working class away from collectivist solutions to their problems. Any conception of social welfare is based upon collective responsibility for sharing resources. Even the 'tri-partite thrusts of modernism' have been based on a notion of collective responsibility. We have to ask whether the social contract at any stage offers a vehicle for this process of change. Could the working class have become the hegemonic political force within tri-partite modernism? Has the Left in refusing that opportunity opened up the path for the destruction of collectivist solutions and the turn to Thatcherism?

Our strategy was to 'smash the social contract' for an 'alternative economic strategy'. We succeeded in the former and failed in the latter. In return for the co-operation of the working class we could have posed demands which opened up the extension of democracy in society and industry. But we never became involved in the policy issues and the social contract became a passive vehicle for imposed solutions. People rejected collective solutions and turned towards aggressive individualism. In the popular imagination socialism has been dubbed 'passive, coercive and corporatist' and as Stuart Hall points out, this is the vision of socialism adopted by many sections of the Left. He states that democracy is now central rather than peripheral. By this I take him to mean that our practice in achieving alliances around our demands must be as democratic as the demands themselves.

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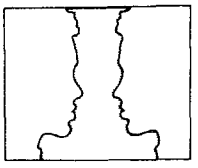

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and beyond era. There was, however, a parallel growth of movements with reactionary ideals which created a social fabric for Thatcherism. We did not involve ourselves at all adequately in the ideological debates on the nature and content of modernism. We concentrated on the question of resources and allowed space for reactionary forces to develop a hegemonic position. For example: in 1977-8 Shirley Williams, then Secretary of State for Education and Science, initiated the 'Great Education Debate'. The majority of the Left saw it as nothing more than a 'smokescreen for implementing cuts' and ignored it. The fact remained that there was a major ideological as well as resource crisis in education. We lost the ideological battle and through it, ironically enough, helped to undermine a popular support for education and strengthened popular acceptance of cuts.

We need to ask why people do not value the public services. Stuart Hall comments in his article on the bureaucratic, corporatist nature of public services which are not accessible to the people they are supposed to serve. But our response has been for 'No cuts' and defensive battles rather than to try and examine the sort of services people would support. If defensive battles are to give us the space to create wider alliances for alternative policies we must allow a more creative approach. Only if our objective is not just to save services but also to change the nature of the services through saving resources, can we create any democratic framework for participation and change.

For most people the Left's Alternative Economic Strategy remained an abstract goal to be obtained at some future date when alliances had been forged through wage militancy and defensive campaigns. The alternative was seen as a package and because people could not identify with its individual demands, they rejected it as such. Did our approach towards sectional battles help to achieve this? Many people have commented on the level of disunity that sectionalism has brought to the working class.

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Sectional battles

It has been suggested that sectional battles allow identification with other causes. There seems to be little evidence to suggest this. Since the beginning of the big wages offensives of the past two years, women's pay has deteriorated in relation to men's and the low paid have remained low paid. Indeed, there was little support for the actions of the public service workers on low pay. I am suggesting that there is nothing inherent within sectional battles which will lead them on to identify with other people's problems. Indeed one of the results of these battles has been the break-up of class solidarity. There has certainly been a relationship between sectional demands for higher wages and a popular acceptance of cuts within the South East and Midlands.

If we can now finally accept that the militant wage campaigns have not led to an increase in political consciousness, then we need to examine why. Most people in the trade union movement recognise that we are not in a 1972-74 situation over the Government's new Employment Bill. The Government came to office with a 'mandate' to curb secondary picketing. There has been little recognition that this Bill is a rag bag of moves highly ideological in their nature which are openings for a coherent if radically different vision of society. The ending of maternity benefits for workers in small companies, the bureaucratising of the method of obtaining maternity leave, the ending of employment protection in small companies and changes within the laws governing trade union recognition, will affect all those people currently outside the large battalions of the trades unions ie, the low paid, women and immigrant workers. The Tories are working on the divisions already inherent within the trade union movement to produce a real conflict between organised and unorganised workers. The trade union movement by highlighting secondary picketing as the major issue within the Bill will be unable to generate the necessary solidarity within the movement to fight the Bill. It is time we examined our wages offensive. I am not meaning to suggest that struggles over wages are somehow wrong. What I do want to suggest is that when we fight these battles we should do so in relation to the social wage and alternative services, as a whole, and not simply on the basis of unequal power in the movement to achieve wage claims.

The abortion fight

The only area in which a wider alliance has been built is the public support for liberal abortion laws. This campaign managed to bring together the women's liberation movement, the TUC, and many shades of left, liberal and centre opinion. Opinion polls indicated that up to 80% supported the 1967 Act and a significant proportion of people supported the concept of a 'Woman's right to choose'. The alliance has not been without its problems as the big TUC sponsored demonstration showed. When a number of women attempted to take over the march they were not simply being politically destructive. They were showing a level of deep seated hostility and resentment to the basis on which the organised labour movement was supporting their issue. Whilst the TUC had given needed support to the campaign it has failed to adopt feminism within its ideology or its organising structures. This means the trade union movement allowing space for women to operate within its ranks on their own terms, and women in turn connecting up to some of the wide objectives of the trade union movement. A broad democratic alliance must open up a new stage of consciousness, allowing separate movements to recognise not just the issue around which others are fighting, but to learn to understand their strategy within that fight and accordingly change their own objectives to accomodate it. The alliance needs to be built on a practice of mutual support and the role of the Left within all this should be to create the space necessary to enable people to make the connections.

The cuts

At present the Left is at best marginal politically and at worst is digging its own grave. We are answering a total if mad vision with simplistic demands for 'no change'. The best illustration of this comes within the cuts campaigns. There are sections of people who spontaneously respond against a proposal to cut services which directly affect them. But we cannot assume from this that they are opposed to a policy of cuts overall. A slogan of 'No cuts' is not at all helpful when people are dubious of the nature of the services we are defending. We need to re-build confidence in the services and this can only be done by opening up democratic participation within them, determining the nature of services on the basis of people's perceived needs.

Only if our defensive campaigns are built upon people's expression of their needs within the community will we win the broad political support to conserve those resources and redirect their use to meet changing needs. Campaigns of this nature, based upon maintaining resources, have the potential to grasp the imagination of people and to open up a collective vision. They also ensure a forum where sectionalism can be confronted as the conflicting opinions of various sections can be discussed and challenged and fought through to a sharing of resources. To achieve these forms of alliance it may well be necessary to challenge certain areas of restrictive practices and authoritarianism within the trades unions and left political parties.

Alternative policies in practice

This approach towards defensive campaigns does at least have the potential to allow us to build our alternative policies in practice. It may give the space for people to begin to make the connection between immediate struggles and the Left's alternative economic strategy. On the other hand it may give us the space to question the validity of our alternative policies. There is a massive gulf not just between the organised trade union movement and other sections of the population, but also between 'advanced' sections of the labour movement in struggle for sectional objectives and other sections which do not have the 'industrial muscle' with which to fight.

We are in a period of choice about the future impact of the Left and its ability to present a coherent alternative. We also have major opportunities to grasp in founding this new alliance. It is true that as people recognise the impact of Tory policies on their life they seek a change, but they are not turning to the Left because, in reality, we have not shown ourselves to have much to offer. Our current alternative has not yet made sense to many people and we may well face a frightening future unless we can pool our experiences and skills in creating a viable alternative which goes beyond the increasingly narrow 'correctness' of political party lines.

We have all, at some stage, experienced the boorish nature of debates on the left. A democratic strategy requires a democratic and respectful method of debate, and we shall have to come to terms with the fact that the 'means' of our political practice are determining its 'ends'. This contribution to the debate is a plea for tentativeness. The experience of many people during this period of a return to fundamentalism is to find that they have no space within left political groupings. If it continues we shall lose some of the best and most committed people who feel their integrity can no longer cope. Any grouping which does not cherish and give space to its dissidents can only end by being repressive and self enclosed and reinforcing. We are at the cross roads of that choice.

We welcome Discussion contributions on articles appearing in the journal

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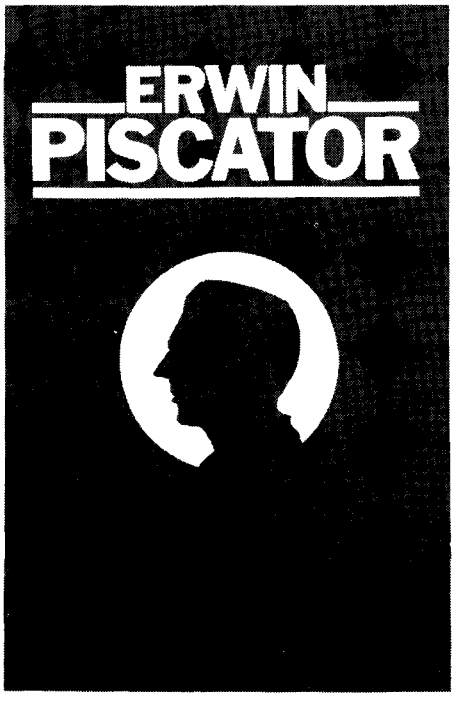
Reviews

THE POLITICAL THEATRE
Erwin Piscator
Eyre Methuen 1980 374pp pb£3.95



This long overdue edition of Piscator's only book, with copious introductory notes to each chapter by Hugh Rorrison, goes a long way towards filling out for a British readership our picture of 1920s political theatre in Berlin. Its initial interest for people concerned with political theatre today will lie in the principles and aims behind Piscator's work — principles and aims which are not dissimilar from those of the Left theatre movement now. For example, part of the programme of *Proletarisches Theater*, a small agit-prop group touring halls and meeting-rooms in working-class districts which was Piscator's first venture into political theatre, requires:

> ' . . . simplicity of expression, lucidity of structure, and a clear effect on the feelings of a working-class audience. Subordination of all artistic aims to the revolutionary goal: conscious emphasis on and cultivation of the idea of class struggle.'

When that company's home was closed down by the Social Democratic authorities, the development of 'epic' theatre began through Piscator's involvement with the *Volksbühne*, originally set up as a workers' theatre but which had settled in more recent times for more conventional and classical fare. His use of revue-like short scenes, projection and film, revolving and conveyor-belt stages, and his collaboration with visual artists like Grosz and Heartfield have all become familiar as part of the trappings of that 'epic' style; what is perhaps less familiar is the drive of that age towards 'objective' theatre, the consideration that history and politics were of primary importance, the desire to put the latest technological developments in theatre at the service of the international workers' movement.

Needless to say, such considerations and desires did not go unimpeded. The catalogue of trials and tribulations which Piscator's company faced during its progress to the celebrated *Piscator-Bühne* productions at the Theater am Nollendorfplatz had both external and internal dimensions not unfamiliar to Left theatre practitioners now. Beginning with his feeling of shame at declaring his profession while serving on the front in 1915, through his account of the slowness of the labour movement to take theatre seriously, and on to the Communist Party's reluctance to support 'propaganda', the setting is familiar. And when it comes to the internal organisation of his company and their approach to aesthetic issues, the dilemmas have even more of a contemporary ring. Appeal to the emotion or to the intellect? Plays for pleasure or only for 'aggressive' propaganda? Working only with working-class actors possessed of revolutionary consciousness, or using stars and actresses connected with wealthy backers — as he did later on for the famous season which included *Schweyk*.

Even the accounts of last-minute panics on first nights (as with the documentary *In Spite of Everything*) and the familiar complaint of 'not enough time' are not without their political overtones when one considers the extent to which Piscator swept all before him in order to realise his vision of Marxist theatre on a grand scale. Charges of being dictatorial with companies, insensitive to writers, and of his direction sometimes erring on the side of gimmickry are dismissed by him, usually with political arguments but not without a hint of the self-righteousness worthy of his ancestor Johannes (one of the first German translators of the bible), a quality which Hugh Rorrison is quick to detect in his notes.

Comments like 'Perhaps my whole style of directing is a direct result of the total lack of suitable plays' and 'My technical devices had been developed to cover up the deficiencies of the dramatists' products go some of the way perhaps to explaining why Brecht never collaborated with him on a major project. Certainly, as the book continues, the urge to read deeper and deeper between the lines grows greater. What went on in people's minds, for example, when the benevolent idea of employing trade unionists to provide a mass choir for their productions of Upton Sinclair's 'Singing Jailbirds' nearly resulted in strike action over their wages? His task was made no easier either by his contemporary critics, with the exception of Herbert Ihering and Walter Kerr. Otherwise the response of the Berlin critics to his work was again depressingly familiar. Beginning with the hackneyed cry for the 'well-rounded' characters they missed in his early productions, they then used the self-same aesthetic criteria he had established to attack him over the later, more 'popular' comedy *Boom*.

By this time however it was revealed that the *Piscator-Bühne* was in debt to the tune of some 200,000 marks, a problem Piscator ascribes generously to his administrator Otto Katz. Even the 'Special Sections' of the *Volksbühne*, a group of young workers in that organisation, numbering 16,000 and giving Piscator his strongest most consistent support through block bookings, weren't enough to guarantee the existence of his theatre. Neither were the 400,000 marks of the Schultheiss brewery — the company was nicknamed for a while the *Piscator-Bühne*. So it's not without some irony then that one of Piscator's remarks echoes through this book: 'No other art form . . . relies so heavily on the existence of a community of like-minded people as does the theatre.'

How true.

Steve Gooch

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CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS FREEDOM

Mike Power writes: The Campaign for Press Freedom was launched during the Trades Union Congress in Blackpool 1979. The need for the labour movement to counter the uniform hostility of the media became brutally clear during the winter of discontent 1978/1979.

The Campaign has formulated seven points in its statement of aims which include: challenging the myth that only private ownership provides genuine press freedom, to find ways to encourage diversity and new forms of ownership including co-operatives and independent trusts, and for greater access and accountability of the media.

It calls for the creation of alternative newspapers, including the consideration of a national daily sympathetic to the labour movement, and is currently sponsoring the *East End News*.

The Campaign aims to encourage industrial democracy in the media, and will follow up the principles enunciated in the Minority Report to the Royal Commission on the Press which included the idea of a National Printing Corporation. It also calls for a reformed and reconstituted Press Council and a Freedom of Information Act. Many media, trade union, political and academic personalities are among its sponsors, and its affiliates include many national unions as well as having a growing individual membership.

In February over 300 attended the Campaign's first public meeting in London which was addressed by Tony Benn. At a follow-up meeting groups were set up to promote research and activity around the statement of aims.

The first 10,000 copies of the Campaign's manifesto *Towards Press Freedom* were quickly sold out and it has been reprinted. Several thousand copies of the bulletin *Free Press* have been circulated. This fledgling organisation is very speedily establishing itself and its potential has been widely recognised. Its importance and long-term influence could be immense. *Details of Membership* both for organisations and individuals can be obtained from the convenor: John Jennings 274-288 London Road Hadleigh Essex SS7 2DE.

Towards Press Freedom 30p is also available from John Jennings.

THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Peter Brimson writes: Many inner urban areas — plundered by cuts and abandoned by industry — now have high rates of unemployment and no prospects for the future. The alternative economic strategies put forward by the Left as a response to these issues often seem abstract and not specifically relevant to the problems of particular areas.

Hence mobilising people (other than workers directly affected by closures or layoffs) on a local level around employment issues is a problem. Some ideas for local action (though not solutions) are contained in the last part of *Small Firms: Magic or Myth?* and *Islington's Multinationals* published by the Islington Economy Group.

We discuss what a left Labour local authority should be doing, together with possible actions on the part of trade unions and community groups. Both councils and unions should be openly pressing the Government for more cash (we show how this could be raised) to be spent on expanded services and building up Direct Labour. Direct involvement in industry is important: the setting up of factories to manufacture local authority building and stationery supplies, the establishment of industrial co-ops (especially where a private firm has failed) and support for workers wanting to develop alternative products. The labour movement must involve itself in such programmes to make them truly democratic ie, it is no good having expanded services unless they are planned by local people (which means mobilising around alternative plans). Direct Labour must be closely tied into tenants' needs: the development and technical competence on the part of workers involved. To help the process along and provide educational and investigative back-up to the movement, we suggest the establishment of TU resource centres.

The need for these alternative approaches is established by the two studies: *Islington's Multinationals* (which describes with 17 detailed case histories why 17 large firms pulled their subsidiaries out of the borough causing several thousand jobs to be lost) and *Small Firms, Magic or Myth?*, which shows

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Notes

the total absurdity of Tory ideas that small firms can expand and generate jobs. We argue that small firms are in long term decline and that their future will be to generate more unemployment.

Small Firms, Magic or Myth? and *Islington's Multinationals* available from: Peter Brimson (to whom cheques payable) (price £1.20), 56 Cowley Road, London, E11. Trade orders: Southern Distribution, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

MERSEYSIDE

Andy Shallice writes: 'As one door shuts, another one closes', was the slip-of-the-tongue of a prominent Merseyside trade union official but an accurate representation of one aspect of the crisis in the region. Over thirty thousand redundancies have been announced in the last two years. Over twelve thousand people leave Liverpool every year. In addition to which the region has suffered from long-existing social problems — whether it is the housing or education provision; if you live in Bootle you have the worst chance in Britain of going to university.

Merseyside in Crisis, by the Merseyside Socialist Research Group, establishes the nature and extent of the crisis now facing Merseyside and documents how the reliance of the local economy on multinationals has increased the vulnerability of the area. Previous state policies towards depressed areas are reviewed and found wanting. The answers that the Labour Party and the trade union movement in the area have suggested are examined, not only at the present but throughout the century, and are found not to challenge the causes of the decline.

The book is not a manifesto. It is a contribution to a debate within the socialist and labour movements throughout Britain which is vital for the creation of an alternative strategy, and is available from: 23 Glover Street, Birkenhead, Merseyside. Price: 95p (plus 15p p&p).

SOCIALIST FILM

Sally Hibbin writes: Are you fed up with meetings in empty halls where the speaker talks far too long? Do you wonder why so few new faces appear at political events? Maybe it's because they are often boring. So for a change why not show a film — they can entertain, educate and stimulate discussion. But having decided that it is a good idea, new problems arise — what film? How do you book it? How do you show it? Where do you get a projector? What was that film called that reversed male and female roles? Is there anything good on Bolivia?

Socialist Film Services is a new organisation whose brochure answers all these questions. It details a wide range of left-wing films suitable for different purposes. Whether you want a film on nuclear power or race, there will be a film in the catalogue to suit your purpose. The films are conveniently listed under subject headings to make selection easier. A brief blurb describes the content and nature of the film and gives details on how to book it. It even includes a section on feature films — for events, entertainment etc — ranging from 'Illustrious Corpses' to the 'Great Dictator'.

There is a section on how to show films including useful information on publicity, booking, showings, equipment and how to get it. So if your trade union, women's group or student union want to branch out and show a film this brochure is very useful. It gives you all the information you need for a succesful film show. Available from Ken Hulme, Room 427, The Wool Exchange, Brushfield St, London E1. £1.00 including postage.

Contributions to *Notes* (brief please) are welcome. We need copy before the 1st of the month preceding publication.

Screen Education 34

Cultural Perspectives

A provocative collection of articles about the different ways that the term 'culture' operates across a range of political and educational discourses. The issue includes *Francis Mulhern* on culture and cultural struggle, *Stuart Hall* on the work of Raymond Williams, *Angela McRobbie* on subcultures, *Simon Frith* on punk and the concept of leisure, *Richard Johnson* on cultural studies and educational practice, *Tony Bennett* on popular culture as 'teaching object', *Hazel Carby* on multicultural education, *Diana Adlam & Angie Salfield* on the concept 'linguistic diversity' and a portfolio of photographs by *Bob Long*.

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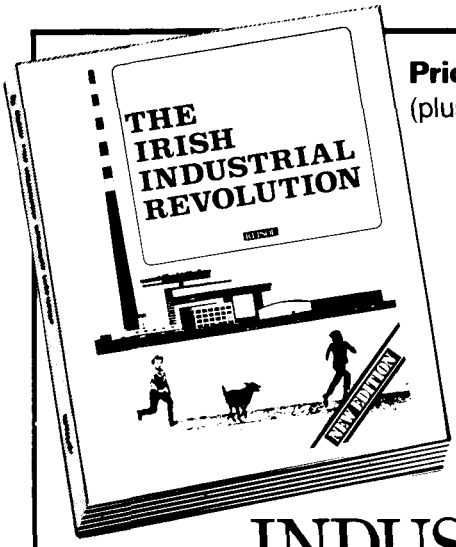

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These writings do not in themselves provide a Marxist theory of law. However, a knowledge of these writings is shown to be a necessary grounding for the further elaboration of such a Marxist theory. Future theorists must either develop or take issue with these texts: they cannot ignore them.

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